

A FEMINIST READING OF LA VIEILLE'S SPEECH IN JEAN DE MEUN'S
PORTION OF LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE

BY

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Abstract

This dissertation undertakes to produce a close reading of la Vieille's speech in Jean de Meun's portion of *Le roman de la rose*. This speech has been traditionally interpreted as ironic, but this analysis seeks to incorporate the work of feminist critics as well as a relatively new area of research on women's lives in 13th-century Europe, to develop a feminist reading strategy that can be applied to this text as well as to other notoriously misogynist texts. The first chapter consists of a review of the literature on the *Rose* and brings to light the diverse ways in which this text has been read by critics. The second chapter focuses on a structural feature of the text as a whole, called imbricated structure, and describes how this feature can be identified in all of the major speeches of Jean's portion of the *Rose*. This pattern has implications for reading and interpreting the themes and references brought up in each speech. A third chapter establishes the historical context within which modern readers can situate this text, that of 13th-century France. Chapter 4 offers a close reading of la Vieille's speech, taking into account the structure described in Chapter 2. In Chapter 5, the conclusion, it is suggested that in order to become a resistant reader, to use Judith Fetterly's term, readers need to become aware of and move beyond the patriarchal norms that have guided and continue to guide literary criticism.

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Introduction

The numerous allusions to reading within Jean de Meun's portion of *Le Roman de la rose* have led the Swiss medievalist, Marc-René Jung, to comment that this poem is an allegory of reading for, as he writes, "lire *Le Roman de la rose*, c'est lire le récit de lecteurs" (1978, 241). One of these readers is la Vieille, who incorporates into her speech allusions to both Latin and vernacular texts. In this thesis I seek to articulate a reading strategy that opens up new ways of reading la Vieille's speech. Therefore, this study is at once a study of la Vieille's speech and a reflection on the act of reading itself. I aim to show that in order to go beyond the critical tendency to read la Vieille's speech as comical and ironic, it is necessary to recognize the cultural assumptions that have guided critical readings of this text. By doing so, it is possible to see that by drawing on Latin and vernacular sources to build her arguments regarding love, the author of the *Rose* has la Vieille use these sources to problematize the legitimacy of certain reading practices, particularly those of the male academic community. What the author has her do with these texts is to rewrite and reread them and, inadvertently or not, reveal the role that texts and reading play in the reproduction of a patriarchal order that legitimizes male control of female sexual function.

Chapter 1: Towards a Feminist Reading of La Vieille's Speech

1. Why a feminist reading?

La Vieille's speech in Jean de Meun's portion of *Le Roman de la rose* is where I begin to lay the foundations of a feminist reading strategy for medieval texts, and it would be hard to find a better place to start such a project. Jean's text was widely circulated throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, and controversy seems to have surrounded it wherever it went. It is today, and was then, especially known for its misogyny, and the speech of la Vieille bears out this reputation just as well as any other portion of it. This speech lends itself to feminist analysis for two reasons.

First, la Vieille belongs to a tradition of the old woman, a type of misogynous stock character who owes its very existence to associations between the female body, excessive appetite for sex, bodily decay and death. As a former prostitute turned procuress, la Vieille is a perfect locus for these associations. And yet, she appropriates the language of the male university community in order to speak out against the misogynous tradition. Second, while she speaks out against this order, she is still a construct of a male author, Jean de Meun.

The only thing that is certain about her speech is that there is no stable reference point from which to begin to interpret it. The instability of meaning, which is characteristic of Jean de Meun's portion of the *Roman de la rose*, provides an opportunity for new readings of this text. The first step in articulating a feminist reading of la Vieille's speech involves reviewing how it has been read by traditional critics. Therefore, in this chapter I explore two complementary avenues of inquiry regarding readings of Jean de Meun's portion of *Le Roman de la rose*. A first section looks at how this work has been read over the centuries and what types of assumptions

have guided the major critical readings of it. The second avenue concentrates on la Vieille's speech. Based on my conclusions of the first avenue of inquiry into the act of reading the *Rose*, I look at how la Vieille's speech has been read by critics, and examine the implications of these critical readings. In so doing I seek to establish how modern readers have been directed by experts to read la Vieille's entire speech as ironic. I then present the views of two recent feminist critics, Ronnie Ancona and Gerda Lerner, with a view to showing how readers can draw on their discussions to alter the way they approach such notoriously misogynist texts as la Vieille's speech.

2. Reading *Le Roman de la rose*

Like so many aspects of *Le Roman de la rose*, the tasks of defining its place in the history of Western literature and of describing the extent of its influence on later works throughout all of Western Europe are as overwhelming as attempting to develop a coherent reading of the work itself. It is a pivotal work in the full meaning of that term, for beyond the plain fact that such an erudite text could appear in the vernacular, the immense popularity and notoriety it achieved marks a critical moment in the history of French literature. John V. Fleming has made the important point that if Jean de Meun wrote in the vernacular, this does not mean that his vision was controlled by vernacular literature (1992, 82). Indeed, the *Rose*, with its numerous Latin-language sources, is an attestation to the fact that by the end of the thirteenth century, the French language had become rich enough to sustain many profound philosophical and theological

discourses. In the modern world, where French has long enjoyed the reputation of a language of intellectual discourse, it is difficult for readers to appreciate the importance of such a shift. It is even more difficult, however, for modern readers to appreciate the *Rose* as a work of literature due to a large gap between the cultural context of today's world and the world of Jean de Meun. The first obstacle is one of language. In order to read the *Rose* in the original language one first has to learn to read Old French, and even then, meaning is often a matter of negotiation and interpretation. Beyond the language barrier lies the vast world of Latin learning: Latin literature, along with some Greek texts that had Latin translations, formed the corpus of the curriculum in the Cathedral schools and later, in the thirteenth century, in the rising universities. Truth, for the medieval student of theology and philosophy, was not to be discovered through empirical methods of investigation, but rather, was sought in the texts of the ancient writers. This body of literature is today not well known to most university-educated readers, even in translation, and the status of authority bestowed upon it by university-trained medieval readers is difficult to grasp. A third barrier exists at the level of literary techniques and literary production. The authors of the *Rose* belonged to an allegorical tradition, and neither portion of the text can be fully appreciated at face value. A reader must not only understand the meaning of allegory, but also its meaning for the medieval world. Without some familiarity with this tradition, a modern reader may easily be put off by a text that simply appears to be odd. Finally, there is the problem of the notion of innovation. Contrary to the modern notion of the writer as pioneer in search of new forms of expression, the medieval writer sought to imitate models and make use of sources, *la matière* from which new texts could be produced. The intricate ways in which medieval writers imitated models while at the same time finding ways to innovate within a very fixed framework are difficult to perceive without also being familiar with Latin learning. Due to the

extensive erudition of the two authors of the *Rose*, especially Jean de Meun, this text transformed vernacular literature through lengthy allusions to and innovative ways of using Latin writings. Since the use of Latin sources in the *Rose* was so extensive, the completed work brought Latin learning to a larger reading public. If some literary historians associate the birth of French literature with Jean de Meun's *Rose*, it is because the erudition of this work places it on a par with the prestigious Latin texts. This transformation of vernacular literature was to have profound implications for all of European literature. By the time Chaucer wrote *The Canterbury Tales* in the late fourteenth century, the *Rose* had acquired the status of an authoritative text formerly bestowed only on works written in Latin.¹

The twentieth century has seen a flowering of specialized, scholarly treatments of the *Rose* even if the text holds little interest for a broader public of readers. Kevin Brownlee identifies three major orientations with regard to *Rose* scholarship in the twentieth century: 1) the neo-patristic perspective, 2) the philosophical perspective and 3) the purely literary perspective.² The neopatristic perspective is illustrated in the work of John V. Fleming, who reads the *Rose* as a Christian allegory of the Fall and Amant's actions as typical of those one would expect of a young man who has lost his reason. According to Fleming, it is the figure of Raison who in her speech maps out all of the important themes to be treated in the *Rose*, and who properly represents the views of the author. Fleming's interpretation is closely associated with the eminent Chaucer scholar, D. W. Robertson, who in a work that has now become a reference for students of medieval literature, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives*, argues that modern readers easily fall into the trap of distorted, anachronistic readings of medieval texts

because they are not sufficiently trained to recognize the differences in perspective between the modern and the medieval worlds. Robertson seeks to show that medieval writing and reading were based on the principle that the surface level of any text is merely a vehicle for spiritual ideas. He cautions modern readers, for example, against interpreting misogynous discourse as a reflection of a medieval belief that women were inherently evil, but rather to associate the image of women with medieval ideas about the temptations of the flesh and the calamities that could result if this flesh is not properly subdued. While Robertson's views, and those of critics who rely on his work, have made an immensely valuable contribution to medieval studies, and to the study of the *Rose*, many of their conclusions become problematic in the light of what is left out of their analysis. I will discuss this point in greater detail in a later section on criticism of la Vieille.

The philosophical perspective is illustrated in the work of Winthrop Wetherbee, who maps out the influences of the twelfth-century humanism of the School of Chartres on the vernacular poets, and especially Jean de Meun. Wetherbee argues that Jean's portion of the *Rose* is deeply connected to the Platonism of the twelfth century and bears witness to the change of attitude in Jean's time with regard to Chartrian thought. It is fitting here briefly to review Wetherbee's view of the Chartrian humanists in order to describe accurately his view of their influence on Jean de Meun.

The School of Chartres was a cathedral school where, under the influence of Thierry of Chartres, an intellectual practice developed that emphasized the "rational and scientific as against

traditional authority”(Wetherbee 4). It was here that scholars of the twelfth century expanded the traditional view that authority was to be found only in the writings of the Church Fathers. They began to explore works of non-Christian writers such as Plato, Aristotle and Ovid, and to reconcile them with Church teaching. It is natural then, that literature would take on a greater importance at this time for clerics since the Chartrians perceived literary texts to be bearers of truths, even though their truths might be veiled. Three of the great names associated with this school are Bernardus Silvestris, Alain de Lille and Jean de Hanville. The affinities of the *Rose* with Alain de Lille’s *De Planctu Naturae* are apparent, and it is generally accepted that Jean knew the writings of the twelfth-century humanists. The very specific ways in which Jean de Meun appropriates their work illustrates the decline in faith in the humanist ideals, for what Jean does with them in his portion of the *Rose* is to confront them with worldly values and lived experience, thus making apparent their flaws by displaying them within the context of human complexity. Wetherbee views, for example, the three figures of Raison, Nature and Genius as all being limited in some way. This view is the source of much debate among *Rose* critics who belong to the neo-patristic orientation. While both the neo-patristic and the philosophical perspectives argue in favor of the poem’s Christian meaning, their main dispute lies in the question of whether or not the figure of Raison in Jean’s continuation of the poem represents the views of the author. This point of contention is no small matter for the debate has more profound consequences with regard to the way modern readers are guided by experts in their approaches to reading *Le Roman de la rose*.

If American critics of the twentieth century are deeply engaged in questions of historicized readings of the *Rose*, and are at odds over what the text meant for its contemporary reading public, French-language critics are largely concerned with what might be called purely literary aspects -- language, rhyme, structure, the allegorical tradition and source identification. It is no exaggeration to state that the work of the French medievalist, Ernest Langlois, represents the foundations on which *Rose* criticism of the twentieth century has been based. In 1891, Langlois published his now famous *Origines et sources du Roman de la Rose*, in which he undertakes a study of the way both authors of the *Rose* appropriated Latin sources. In addition, Langlois brings to light the ways in which Guillaume's use of sources differs from that of Jean, as well as the differences in composition style between the two authors. Between 1914 and 1924, Langlois published his five-volume edition of the *Rose* which was to become the authoritative edition until 1970 at which time Félix Lecoy published his three-volume edition. Langlois not only studied the Latin sources of the *Rose*, but also undertook the study of all the extant manuscripts available to him in the early twentieth century to publish, in 1910, *Les Manuscrits du Roman de la rose*. Langlois' work on the *Rose* is so important that it is difficult to imagine where *Rose* criticism would be today without it. Thanks to his published works on this poem and to his extensively documented critical edition, readers can readily identify many of the Latin sources and easily access the manuscript variants. Indeed, his work fills the gap created by the modern reader's lack of familiarity with Latin learning to make this text once more accessible to those who wish to explore it.

Langlois' work provides access to understanding the complexities of Jean's use of Latin sources. Although Langlois' findings are immensely valuable, his views that the poem as a whole is chaotic in structure and that Jean de Meun in his continuation essentially destroyed Guillaume's original plan for the poem have been challenged by critics in recent years. In 1952, Alan Gunn first contested the view of the *Rose* as digressive and chaotic by revealing the extensive use of amplification within each speech in Jean de Meun's portion. In recent years, critics have been able to discern a pattern within the different speeches of Jean's portion. I refer to this pattern as "imbricated structure." Rather than following a digressive thematic sequence, as Langlois and others have stated, the speeches are actually structured in such a way that themes introduced in one part of the speech, and abandoned before being fully developed, resurface in a later part of the speech, and this appearance and reappearance of themes is done in an ordered manner. Lee Patterson (1983) has brought out this structure in La Vieille's speech. Patricia J. Eberle's article on the optical design of the poem presents a unique perspective which supports the view that the author of the *Rose* composed his poem according to a plan. She suggests that three works on optics, Nigel Longchamps' (Nigellus Wirecker) *Speculum stultorum*, Robert Grosseteste's *De iride et speculo* and Book One of Seneca's *Naturales quaestiones*, "De ignibus in aere," also influenced the author of the *Rose*. According to Eberle, the new title, *Le Mirouer aus amourens*, that Jean de Meun gives to the poem is an indication to the reader regarding how to read the multiple "digressions" in the text. For Eberle, these digressions are optical glasses which together constitute "a complex optical instrument" (245). Therefore, the text should not be compared to a "mirror" in the common sense of the word, but rather, to a series of *mirouers* according to the meaning of the word as understood in thirteenth-century optical science, that is, an optical instrument whose multiple lenses distort images in order to reveal something about

them. According to this perspective, la Vieille's speech is part of this optical instrument and the *mirouer* constituted by her speech, although distorting its subject, also reveals some element of truth about it. More recently, Susan Stakel, in *False Roses: Structures of Duality and Deceit in Jean de Meun's "Roman de la rose"* has argued that the structure of Jean's portion of the text follows a tight symmetry. According to her analysis, the central point of Jean's *Rose* is the dialogue between the God of Love and Faux Semblant (10922-11984). This view represents a major shift in perspective because up until now this dialogue has been viewed as an odd digression within the text.³

I would like to point out another aspect of Langlois' work that has yet to be seriously challenged. That is, his unexamined confidence that Jean de Meun sought to translate faithfully the Latin sources he appropriated. Since there exists today roughly 300 extant manuscripts of the *Rose*, it is the scholar's task to decide which one is most likely to be the closest to Jean's original version. Langlois' basic procedure when preparing his critical edition was to compare the borrowings to the Latin source and to eliminate those lines that contained the most translation "errors" in favor of those lines that most closely represented the Latin text. He expressed his methodology in the following manner: "En comparant celles-ci au texte latin, il est facile de décider sûrement quelle est la bonne leçon, et en même temps de grouper en familles les copies qui ont des fautes communes" (*Origines et sources*, vi). This view of Jean as a faithful translator of his Latin sources becomes problematic in light of three important characteristics of his text. First, Jean often gives the wrong name when citing sources, such as the famous lines in Raison's speech (4395-4401)⁴ where Jean quotes the *Bible* but attributes the lines to Cicero. In other

instances, he cites an author whose work came to him through secondary sources. Second, Jean appropriates many authors without ever citing the source. Lastly, Jean made many fundamental changes to his source material. I will develop this point further in Chapters Two and Four, in which I articulate the ways in which Jean altered many of his principal sources for la Vieille's speech, i.e., Ovid's *Art of Love*, *The Amores*, *The Metamorphoses* and *The Heroïdes*.

Langlois' critical edition of the *Rose* was reconstructed from different manuscripts based on the assumption that the authentic text was that which most closely followed the Latin sources.

Critics now tend to agree that Jean de Meun made more changes to his sources than Langlois was able to discern and that the differences between the source and the new text lend themselves to interpretation. Since Jean alludes over and over again to the act of reading and to texts, it makes sense to assume that the use he makes of Latin sources constitutes his own conscious reinterpretation of them.

In 1972, Félix Lecoy published a three-volume critical edition of the *Rose* based on one manuscript (B.N. fr. 1573), but edited it with the help of a *manuscrit témoin* (Chantilly 686) and three other manuscripts (Dijon 526, B.N. fr. 1559 and 25523). In line with modern editorial practice, Lecoy casts doubt on the possibility of ever recovering an original text and his goal consists of producing a text similar to one that may have been available to readers of Jean de Meun's time.

Armand Strubel's critical edition of the *Rose* (1992) includes the text of the *Rose* based on manuscripts BN 12786 and BN 378, and a facing prose translation in French. Strubel's introduction to the text and footnotes that give insight into textual details are accessible and add to the work of Langlois and Lecoy. The relatively low cost of Strubel's edition in comparison to that of Lecoy, along with the facing translation in modern French, makes Strubel's edition the ideal one for use in teaching.

With respect to the manuscript tradition, there is much to say about how editors make choices for modern critical editions of medieval texts, but when it comes to the *Roman de la rose* the task is fraught with difficulties. The choice of the base manuscripts from which to work is perhaps the most difficult, and it appears that Langlois, Poirion and Lecoy tended to rely on manuscripts that dated either from the 13th century or the early 14th century. This is a good strategy as it would mean that the manuscript of the completed *Rose* was likely something that readers who were contemporaries of Jean de Meun may have seen. The difficulty is being certain of the exact date of the manuscript, for as codicologists know, manuscripts often contain several texts that could have been written at different times, located for some time in one manuscript, then removed from that manuscript and rebound into another. One advantage for *Rose* scholars is that the base manuscripts in which the *Rose* figures (along with other texts) appear to be done by one hand, and so an important criterion to apply to such a choice is the question of whether any particular manuscript appears to be done in one or several hands. Another criterion related to the visual aspects of the manuscript is to decide whether the parchment appears to be uniform and whether the illuminations (if they exist) appear to be done by the same illuminator. Other features that

could be taken into account are the regional linguistic variants, such as verb morphology and orthography. It is difficult to overstate how much work remains to be done in this area. Sylvia Huot has aptly summed up the problem in her book entitled *The Romance of the Rose and Its Medieval Readers*: “The definitive, comprehensive study of the Rose manuscript tradition will be possible only through the combined work of many scholars; and it will certainly rest on the foundation established by Langlois.” (7).

Strubel’s contribution to *Rose* scholarship goes beyond this edition of the text. In the second part of his book entitled *La Rose, Renart et le Graal -- la littérature allégorique en France au XIII^e siècle*, Strubel has many comments on both portions of the *Rose* (Chapter 3, 199-224). He describes how the different elements of the *Rose* work together. First, there is the existence of the two authors, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. He claims that the difference in the two texts lies in ideology and esthetics. While Guillaume’s main purpose is that of allegorical creation, which is itself an object of contemplation or a mirror, Jean distrusts mirrors unless they are *summa* and works in the image of the quest in order to incorporate many different topics. Strubel also has good insight into how the different allegorical figures work within the text. Some, he says, are part of the narrative, while others are external to it, existing only in exempla told by the different speakers. Moreover, certain figures focus only on the action of the narrative (Dangier, Honte, Amor), while others introduce commentary (Raison, Ami, Nature, Genius). *La Vieille* and *Faux Semblant*, on the other hand, do both (215). Strubel’s comments on the problem of temporality in the poem provide an anchor for a reader trying to find a focal point. Strubel remarks that from the outset there are multiple temporal reference points: the time of the

dream, the time when the dreamer has awakened and recalled the dream, the time of the narrator remembering and writing it all down. These multiple temporal reference points lead to a confusion between narrator and protagonist, especially when Jean takes up the poem (200). Strubel's description of these phenomena that span both portions of the text is useful for students of the *Rose*.

The complexity of the *Rose*, and the consequent difficulties in interpreting it, is also manifested in the other issues and problems it raises. Marc-René Jung has focused on this poem as an allegory of reading (28). Such a view is a response to the numerous comments on reading that exist within the body of the poem. Perhaps the most famous of these is found in Raison's speech when she reacts to Amant's reproach of her use of the word "coilles" by stating that her words have another meaning ("en ma parole otre sen ot,/ au mains quant des coillons parloie," l 7128-29), and by so doing attempts to guide him in the proper reading of her tale. The abundance of these comments and their interpretive possibilities has yet to be fully exploited by *Rose* critics. Jung's work in medieval literature has been chiefly concerned with allegory, and the *Rose* is just one among many allegorical poems he has studied. His claim that the *Rose* is an allegory of reading opens up new possibilities for interpreting this poem. That critics have been able to produce extensive studies of the *Rose* that focus on themes other than love points to the work's complexity and partially explains the difficulties that arise when one attempts to interpret it.

The late French medievalist, Daniel Poirion, has contributed to *Rose* scholarship through a one-volume edition of the work based on the manuscript BN fr 25523 (2) and the Méon edition

(1974), and a short yet thorough study of the entire poem entitled *Le Roman de la rose* (1973).

In his study, Poirion gives a global view of the poem by describing a broad context within which new readers of this poem can view the work. He notes, for example, that while the speeches of Ami and la Vieille have obvious connections to Ovid's *Art of Love*, critics must also recognize that the advice they elaborate can also be found in other didactic works of the thirteenth century, such as those of Robert de Blois (166). Poirion expresses the necessity of keeping an open mind when interpreting the *Rose*, especially in light of all of the internal contradictions it presents. He also strongly disagrees with what he sees as an overzealous attachment to irony by the neo-patristic critics. He argues that while irony does play a role in the text, this will not suffice as the last word on the poem (146). Irony has its place within a philosophical and literary project that is more vast and more varied (147). At the same time, Poirion argues, it is going too far to claim that the author's views are in line with the most orthodox theology (147). This would mean that no other figure besides Raison, whom Poirion views as limited (154), has anything to teach the reader. In addition to his strong disagreement with the neo-patristic school, Poirion elaborates another idea that puts his thinking on this point in line with that of Marc-René Jung. That is, Poirion sees an important relationship between the author and the reader that is established through the different speeches (148). This is an important point that argues in favor of a closer reading of these discourses in order to bring to light Jean's specific ideas about reading.

Sarah Kay's critical study of the entire poem (1995) also deals with the general question of reading and interpretation. In her view, this text should be read in light of its internal contradictions. Kay claims that these contradictions are real and that they cannot be explained

away. They are there because “the text seeks to challenge boundaries and principles of order, rather than reaffirm them”(89). For example, Kay claims that the figure of Genius crosses the important boundary between mind and body, and that Jean de Meun seeks to exploit the confusion that results. This view supports the claim made by Poirion and others that the *Rose* is a text which lends itself to multiple, often conflicting, interpretations. Kay’s view of the *Rose* as a text which challenges rather than reaffirms boundaries is very much in line with my project to challenge conventional ways of reading la Vieille’s speech.

Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski’s work on the use of myth in medieval texts supports the idea that multiple readings of this text are inevitable. In her book entitled *Reading Myth, Classical Mythology and Its Interpretations in Medieval French Literature* (1997) she devotes a chapter to the *Rose*. She claims here that the speeches of Ami and la Vieille constitute tripartite, or tryptich, structures. The combination of text and gloss reveals that interpretation of texts can vary. Indeed, one of the general conclusions she draws from her study of new uses of myth is that in medieval writings, texts interact with discourses in new ways, and this interaction generates new meanings for old discourses.

Open-mindedness is what characterizes Douglas Kelly’s most recent study of the *Rose*, *Internal Difference and Meaning in the ‘Roman de la rose’* (1995). Claiming that Jean’s text invites and has elicited a multiplicity of interpretations throughout history, Kelly also points to the divisiveness that this work produces among its readers. His study brings to light the specific characteristics of the text that produce so many divergent readings: 1) the original and often

surprising use made by Jean of his source material; 2) the multiplicity of the possible internal connections among the numerous exempla Jean uses, a connection toward which he directs readers through his frequent allusions to mirrors; 3) the confusion of traditional gender roles through deliberate plays on words and grammatical rules.⁵ While Kelly's own reading of the poem is a clearly Christian one, he argues throughout his study in favor of tolerance for many different views. For example, while arguing against the plausibility of John Fleming's Augustinian context for the interpretation of Jean de Meun's reference to Carthage (5348), he also acknowledges that it is possible that a scribe familiar with Augustine's *Confessions* might have glossed the reference in this way (20). Implied audience is a major focus in Kelly's book, and in this regard his views shed new light on the old question of authorial intent. He supports the position that Jean's implied audience was not a learned one, but this did not prevent his readers from understanding the basic issues raised in the poem. Indeed, that Jean had in mind readers not proficient in Latin is witnessed by the lines in Raison's speech (5007-10) declaring that it would be a good thing for someone to translate Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* into French for layfolk (18). The most interesting portion of Kelly's study is the relationships he draws among Jean's seemingly disparate exempla, arguing that in the context of the *Rose* as a *Mirouer aus amouereus*, a title which Jean attributed to his portion of the work, they can be viewed as so many reflections of the same disastrous consequences of the pursuit of false goods.

While I find most of Kelly's study enlightening, there is one aspect of it which for me is difficult to accept at this point. That is, his construction of the rose as a unified female figure and his subsequent arguments against the interpretation of the poem's ending as a rape. First, he refers

to the rose as *Rose* [my emphasis] as if ‘she’ were a figure in her own right just as Amant is a fully independent figure in the poem. I find this a curious position to take, especially since Kelly also states that ‘she’ is reduced to an object in Jean’s portion of the poem, but that she “gathers about herself a ‘fictional person,’ thus offering a suitable image for Amant’s own person in the literal plot.” (106). This view of the rose makes her an active participant in the process and leads to Kelly’s subsequent argument that the ending constitutes a “near rape”(39), implying thus that the rose gave in to the forces of seduction. This is not clear from the text, nor is it clear that the rose can represent anything beyond the female genitalia to which she is reduced in Jean’s portion. Rather than going into detail with my disagreement here, I prefer to simply state two problems I have with Kelly’s view of ‘Rose’ as a participant: 1) the “fictional person” she gathers around herself must surely include Bel Accueil who, in my view, could also be read as a mirror image of Amant 2) la Vieille gives her advice to Bel Accueil (the rose is not anywhere implied to be part of the audience) who, as Amant tells us, remembers everything word for word but does not believe any of it (12956-12970). Indeed, not only is the woman not a part of the process, but the fragmentation of the implied woman in the text is exactly what prevents her from embodying any voice, hence, any active role.

My own interaction with Kelly’s work bears out the notion that is not unusual for critics of the *Rose* to find several areas of agreement and disagreement. Indeed, they rarely find themselves completely at odds with the views of a particular scholar simply because there is so much to be said about the *Rose* that disagreements often center on details. While I recognize the importance of such details, these disputes have led to polemic debates that have pitted individuals

against one another. A close look at the work of all of the different actors reveals that there is always much common ground between them. Nonetheless, as Kelly has already pointed out, such disagreements create divisiveness among scholars and often reach the level of personal convictions. Such is the nature of this text and its powerful impact on its readers (3).

The response by readers to the poem is studied within the context of textual *mouvance* by scholars such as Sylvia Huot whose important study of the manuscript tradition of the poem, *The 'Romance of the Rose' and Its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (1993), explores the way medieval readers read, responded to and often rewrote Jean de Meun's portion of the *Rose*. Such a critical perspective is of fundamental importance for any reader in our contemporary "print culture" (3), whose notions of authorship are anchored in the contemporary view that authors write definitive versions of texts that are readily identifiable. Even students of medieval literature using scholarly, authoritative editions of medieval texts, have a tendency to take that version for granted rather than problematize the editor's choice of language from among the existing manuscript variants. Huot's book brings to light the extensive manuscript tradition of the *Rose*, studying the marginalia, the glosses and rewritings of the poem. She adopts a generous vision of authorship, proposing that texts such as Gui de Mori's rewriting of the poem be considered from the perspective of Gui as author rather than Jean de Meun. Huot's approach not only forces scholars to rethink their own readings of the poem in light of her findings, but also changes scholarly perspective regarding how the poem influenced later works. It is difficult to know, for example, which version was in the hands of a particular author who incorporated it into his own writing.

Since the thirteenth century, readers have brought to the *Roman de la rose* different perspectives that have produced multiple readings. Jean de Meun's medieval readers were no less diverse in their interpretations of the poem than are modern scholars. The medieval *Querelle de la rose* is at once an instance of lively debate and conflicting readings of the *Rose*. It took the form of a correspondence that involved two known detractors and three known defenders of Jean de Meun's portion of the *Rose*.⁶ These five actors in the debate are known to us today thanks to the preservation of specific letters that they exchanged between May, 1401 and the winter of 1403. Eric Hicks attributes the preservation of these documents largely to Christine de Pizan, one of the well-known detractors of Jean de Meun's *Rose*. It was she who compiled the correspondence and submitted it to Queen Isabeau de Bavière and to Guillaume de Tignonville, Prevost of Paris, for their judgement. Christine, a court poet, was on the same side of the debate as Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris. Nonetheless, Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson attacked the text for different reasons. Gerson's major complaint against the *Rose* stemmed from a sense of moral obligation related to his position as Chancellor of the University of Paris. He did not attack the poem on the grounds of its literary merits, but rather, because he believed it could incite readers to sin (Hill 131). Christine's major complaint has to do with what she sees as a vulgar and distorted view of human sexuality, which ultimately works to degrade women. In her letter to Gontier Col, she criticizes specific aspects of the speeches of all of the major figures in the *Rose* (Hicks 11-22). In regard to Raison's speech, Christine objects to Raison's statement (4368-4369) that in love, it is better to deceive than to be deceived. Raison claims to be the daughter of God and such a statement is incompatible with Christian doctrine.⁷

One aspect of Christine's quarrel with the *Rose* is her objection to the dominant interpretations of the text. Indeed, she seeks to show that the danger of the text lies in the tendency to misread it. For example, in her letter to Gontier Col, Christine challenges Col's view that Raison's use of the term "coilles" is justifiable on the grounds that, as Raison herself states, she is naming noble things by their proper names (6907-6911). What Christine points out is that such an argument is invalid in the post-lapsarian world in which humans are corrupt. The difference of opinion between the two readers calls to mind today's critical debate surrounding the interpretation of Raison. Christine's comments on le Jaloux also involve issues of reading (Hicks 15). On the one hand, she says that readers tend to excuse his misogyny because he is le Jaloux ("Et la laidure qui la est recordee des femmes, dient plusieurs en lui excusant que c'est le Jaloux qui parle..." Hicks 15). On the other hand, they take his words as Gospel truth ("...et voirement fait ainsi comme Dieu parla par la bouche Jeremie." Hicks 15). As for her remarks on la Vieille, Christine seems to be addressing an audience that goes beyond the addressee of her letter, Gontier Col. Indeed, she seems to have in mind fathers of daughters when she asks why anyone would consider la Vieille's discourse as a valuable piece of didactic writing.⁸ In other words, she questions the value of such a text that can so easily mislead readers.

Hill speculates that the opinions of the different actors in the debate may correspond to their individual professional aspirations. In the case of Christine de Pizan, her views may relate to her situation as a widow. After the death of her husband, she was left to support her mother, her own three children and a niece. This position gave her an awareness of the difficulties women faced

when they were called upon to act as head of the household (Hill, 83). Gerson's views are clearly linked to his profession as a preacher. As for the royal secretaries, their defense of the *Rose* was influenced by their interest in the early Humanist movement. Jean de Meun's extensive borrowing from classical works accounts for the early Humanists' admiration for his portion of the *Rose* (Hill 150-151).

Today, interpretation of *Le Roman de la rose* involves many of the same issues that concerned the actors in the *Querelle de la Rose*, as well as new ones. Nonetheless, the debates surrounding how the text should be read are still contentious. One area of *Rose* criticism that merits more attention from scholars is the speech of la Vieille, for not only has it been neglected by scholars, but it also lends itself to feminist analysis. This has been an influential factor in my decision to articulate a feminist reading of la Vieille's speech. Before exploring that possibility in the last portion of this chapter, I now turn to a discussion of the different critical readings of la Vieille's speech in Jean's *Rose*.

3. La Vieille: An Old Blindspot in the Center of a Dream

The figure of la Vieille holds the middle position in the series of speakers of Jean de Meun's portion of *Le Roman de la rose*, after the speeches of Raison and Ami and before those of Nature and Genius. If we add the portion of the text consacrated to her by the narrator and the number of lines taken up by her speech to Bel Accueil, then the total number of lines dedicated to her

equals 2,168, almost one sixth of Jean's entire continuation. And yet, in spite of her position right in the center of this dream, as it were, so little has been written about la Vieille by critics that she has been in a critical blind spot. While scores of articles, and in some cases entire books, have been devoted to the four other figures, only a few published articles have focused specifically on Jean's Vieille.⁹ In other instances, this figure has been discussed together with other characters of her type in the medieval literary tradition or, in recent years, has formed a part of an abundance of critical analyses of Chaucer's Wife of Bath. However, relatively little has been said about la Vieille's speech by major critics of the *Rose*.

One possible explanation for the lack of in-depth analyses of la Vieille's speech may be found in the predominant view of critics that it contains serious logical flaws. Those critics of the neo-patristic orientation tend to view la Vieille as a figure whose speech is so faulty that no astute reader could possibly take her words seriously. John Fleming has stated it this way: "My point is that the structure of her arguments, as well as the network of allusions and associations which bind them together, is demonstrably and comically faulty"(184). This view, however, did not prevent Fleming from devoting serious critical attention to la Vieille's speech in *The "Roman de la rose" -- A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (171-184). He begins his discussion with an insightful review of the tradition of the character of the old woman (*vieille, vekka, vechia, vetula*) (171) in the European literary tradition. Furthermore, he too points to the critical blindspot surrounding la Vieille when he states that "Nowhere in the scholarship devoted to the *Roman de la rose* is there an adequate analysis of the literary techniques which Jean de Meun uses, often with great originality and with great brilliance, in constructing La Vieille's speech" (175). The

great interest of la Vieille's speech for the reader, in Fleming's view, lies in the literary techniques Jean employs to create one of his "greatest comic moments"(175). He claims that the uses la Vieille makes of Horace and of Ovid represent such blatant distortions of each author's meaning that her text serves to illustrate sophistic thinking. As for la Vieille's advice to women, Fleming argues that her teachings only differ from those of the God of Love in a superficial way. Indeed, in elaborating the feminine view of the game of love, la Vieille both ratifies and ridicules the misogyny implicit in the God of Love's courtly doctrine. The two figures, in Fleming's words, "coach opposing teams, but the game is the same for both"(178). The problems inherent in la Vieille's argument place her in the footsteps of the God of Love, Amant, Ami and Faux Semblant, but Fleming adds that her failure to understand nature, which is made apparent by her doctrine of free love, makes of her speech an appropriate prologue to that of Nature (184). While Fleming's analysis designates an important function for la Vieille, that of underminer of the misogyny that subtends the courtly doctrine, his principal focus and "main point" revolve around the flawed character of her argument. Although I have no fundamental disagreements with Fleming's findings that la Vieille's appropriation of Latin sources constitutes misrepresentations of those sources, I disagree that such differences can be reduced to a "comical moment." Rather, I propose that la Vieille's speech is much richer than this and can lend itself to multiple readings. What I find problematic in the neo-patristic perspective is its refusal to view Jean's Vieille independently of the literary tradition of this stock character who, in many cases, was not only old, unattractive and grasping, but also downright vulgar. This is not to say that Jean's Vieille does not fit the description, but what I will argue in Chapter 2 in more detail is that in creating la Vieille's speech, Jean de Meun was innovative with the tradition. Therefore,

reading la Vieille strictly within the context of literary tradition produces a petrified view of a figure for whom Jean created several dimensions.

This reductive reading strategy is apparent in the doctoral thesis of Robert Haller, *The Old Whore and Mediaeval Thought: Variations on a Convention* (1962), in which two assumptions underlie his arguments: 1) a monolithic “medieval reader” and 2) a universal familiarity with figures such as la Vieille:

The dissertation concludes that Mediaeval literary techniques, comic and polemical, assume the reader’s familiarity with figures, like the “old whore”, whose meaning has been well established in earlier works, and whose ideas are consistent with this meaning and are meant to be seen from a sophisticated theological point of view. (Abstract-2)

Today’s reader has been influenced by the post-structural movement and reader-response theory, so that such confidence in the assumption that a medieval author had in mind a specific reader who was assumed to be familiar with the tradition of the “old whore” has been seriously undermined. Indeed, Haller’s statement that such a figure’s “meaning has been well established in earlier works” immediately solicits the question as to why one would bother to interpret Jean’s figure in the first place if its meaning has long ago been “well established.” Clearly, the assumptions underlying such readings call for more scrutiny and the text itself of la Vieille’s speech merits a more open-minded inquiry. Some of the other conclusions of Haller’s thesis, insofar as they represent the neo-patristic perspective, also illustrate some of its shortcomings.

The one on which I will focus here is related to the view expressed by Haller that there is no relationship between the misogynous character of la Vieille's speech and the unequal social status of the men and women of Jean de Meun's day. Arguing that the antifeminism of medieval texts is polemic, that it points to the struggle against certain temptations of the flesh rather than to any negative view of women *per se*, Haller writes that "contrary to what so many people have said, the equality of men and women was a consistent part of medieval thought" (16). Such a statement about the equality of men and women in medieval thinking cannot stand up to the results of research in medieval history. Since Haller's day, much interest has been directed towards the condition of women in the Middle Ages and the results do not bear out such a claim. The assumptions underlying Haller's thinking on the subject of the "old whore," which are so clearly articulated in his thesis, also form the basis of much thinking about *Le Roman de la rose*. As a general rule, those critics who rely on the work of D. W. Robertson adapt a perspective that presumes authorial intent, a universal type of reader and no relationship between the problems raised in the speeches of the different figures and issues regarding the place of women and men in society that Jean de Meun may have been aware of in his own time.

This view also characterizes the work of Chauncey Wood, who is one of only three authors to have published an article devoted wholly to the topic of la Vieille's speech in Jean de Meun's *Rose*, entitled "La Vieille, Free Love, and Boethius in the *Roman de la rose*" (1977). In this short, tightly argued article, Wood reads la Vieille's speech as ironic by identifying the "Boethian tags" and arguing that each one represents a misuse (or misreading) of the *Consolation* intended to amuse or delight an audience familiar with Boethius' text. What

produces the irony here, says Wood, is the opposition between la Vieille's argument in favor of free love and Boethius' argument in favor of free will. Moreover, Wood claims that a thirteenth-century reader would not have failed to miss the irony of her exemplum, especially since this "digression" is framed by the story of Venus and Mars, a tale which was commonly glossed in the Middle Ages as a warning against the bonds created by illicit passion(338)¹⁰. Although Wood's ironic reading of la Vieille's use of Boethius, and indeed her whole discourse on free love, appears at first glance to be remarkably solid, it necessarily imposes upon the text a certain degree of oversimplification. As mentioned above, Wood sees the Boethian exemplum as an intentional misuse of the *Consolatio*, indeed a literary joke. Further, he reads the analogy la Vieille makes between a bird fleeing a cage and a woman fleeing marriage as comic (340). Such a reading works well enough until one takes a closer look at what directly precedes this use of Boethius' caged bird in la Vieille's discourse, that is, her discussion of the origins of marriage (13875--13885). It was instituted by wise men so that men would cease to kill one another; in other words, to impose restraints on men who could not control their own violent behavior. In light of what is known about the disenfranchisement of married women in the middle ages, la Vieille's claim that marriage takes away a woman's natural freedom loses some of its irony. My main disagreement with Wood's ironic reading is that he does not take into account la Vieille's manner of getting to the heart of the matter when she describes marriage as a type of imprisonment for women instituted for and by men. Wood finds the caged bird exemplum faulty because, as he states, "the vows of fidelity are freely taken in the sacrament of marriage" (340). For la Vieille, however, marriage is not a vow taken freely, but rather a structure imposed by men on women, with men's interest at heart. La Vieille has stripped away the status of marriage as a sacrament to expose it as problematic; Wood prefers to cover it up again with religious

imagery. La Vieille's position that marriage is imposed on women removes much of the irony of the Boethian exemplum.

Luis Beltrán is perhaps the first critic to study la Vieille's speech independently of traditional criticism. In his article entitled "La Vieille's Past" (1972), Beltrán argues that Jean de Meun was innovative in his development of the figure of la Vieille when he gave her a past which allows the reader to know her, thus closing the "empty space" between character and reader (92). By allowing the reader to sympathize with la Vieille's lot in life, Beltrán argues, Jean de Meun is questioning the old order in which women need to seek wealth during their youth in order to live well in old age. Furthermore, Jean's attack on courtly love is not accomplished through an insult to women, as such critics as Gérard Paré have argued, but rather, by creating a deeply human character to whom readers relate, Jean is "denying the validity of an exaggerated difference" between men and women. Indeed, he is denying the "validity of the duality Woman-Man as it was understood in his time"(95). La Vieille's cynical advice to Bel Accueil to "pluck" his lovers is defended by Beltrán on the grounds that the old order has hurt her and "so there are, at times, hate and anger in her words"(96).

Beltrán's text presents two specific points of interest. First, it is one of the few readings that goes against the grain of traditional *Rose* criticism that tends to read la Vieille's words from the perspective of the literary tradition of such characters. As such, it brings out aspects of la Vieille's speech previously left undiscussed by critics, namely, the account of her sorry past and the way in which this story distinguishes her from other such figures in the medieval literary

tradition. Furthermore, in his review of the tradition of la Vieille in European literature, Beltrán points out that in the romance tradition, in Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligès* for example, the character Thessala, a sympathetic duenna who furthers her mistress's cause in love, is presented as a positive character (77-78). This perspective sheds new light on the tradition of la Vieille by showing that not all such literary types were vulgar and grasping. The second interesting point brought up in Beltrán's article is the idea that such a figure poses a challenge to the "old order," to a world in which women are economically disadvantaged and depend in one way or another on their bodies to achieve power -- when they are young, they gain financially from their own sexuality, and when they are old through the sexuality of younger women. The description of la Vieille's plight represents a challenge to this order and is an innovative way of looking at la Vieille's speech. One drawback of Beltrán's view, however, is that in developing his argument that Jean's Vieille elicits a sympathetic response from the reader, he does not fully account for those portions of her speech that have made of her an unsympathetic character for so many critics; that is, her abundant cynical advice to Bel Accueil on how to deceive men in order to profit financially from them.

Daniel Poirion has argued against the purely ironic reading of the *Rose* as a whole and sees in the figure of la Vieille an extension of Raison. Moreover, Poirion recognizes the important echoes that exist between the speeches of Raison, Ami, la Vieille and Nature, and sees la Vieille connected to all of them (although he does not give an interpretation of this phenomenon.). The point here is that for Poirion, la Vieille plays a much greater role than a comical element in the *Rose*. Her old age and her sad past introduce the philosophical themes of the vanity of human

existence and the ephemeral nature of beauty. The story of her past brings to light the important issues concerning human existence itself. Another aspect of the *Rose* addressed by Poirion, although not in detail, is his description of the structures of the speeches of Amis and la Vieille as “une composition concentrique de thèmes emboîtés,” (a concentric composition of imbricated themes” my translation). (125). The recognition of this structure by Poirion and others has direct applications for this study of la Vieille’s speech and will be discussed in more detail below.

In her doctoral thesis entitled, “*And the Word Became Flesh*”: *Women’s Language in the Mysogynous Literature of Late Medieval France* (1994), Gretchen Valerie Angelo (a student of Daniel Poirion) devotes a lengthy section to la Vieille’s speech. She argues that la Vieille’s voice is undermined by the authoritative male text which, by emphasizing her physical aspects and her attachment to the memories of her past sexual experiences, associates her speaking voice with the instability of the female body. This emphasis underlines “a certain inappropriateness” of the female speaker and an incompatibility between her purpose and that of the text (115).

Angelo’s reading of la Vieille’s speech recognizes both its complexity as well as the possible validity of la Vieille’s arguments, even though they are undermined by the narrative. By identifying the emphasis on la Vieille’s physical aspects and her past as factors in the undermining of her voice by the text, Angelo positions herself as a reader guided by thirteenth-century theological principles. That is, she follows a traditional mind/body binary that modern readers tend to take for granted as a medieval commonplace. If we read la Vieille’s speech as undermined by the text’s emphasis on her body and her sexual past, then we miss the opportunity

to pose new questions. While I recognize the validity of Angelo's arguments, I submit that la Vieille's speech, indeed la Vieille herself, in turn undermines the validity of the very discourse that seeks to do the same to her.

Sarah Kay makes this very argument in an article entitled "Women's Body of Knowledge: Epistemology and Misogyny in the *Romance of the Rose*" (1994). She claims that la Vieille's speech reverses the misogynistic topoi by turning the vocabulary of misogyny back against its authors (217-8). Kay identifies parallels between la Vieille's speech and those of Ami and le Jaloux, and claims that it is this mirroring of Ami's speech by la Vieille's that undermines the misogynist discourse. Indeed, la Vieille's speech succeeds in bringing to light the claim that the poor moral choices made by women, and which often constitute the subject of misogynous discourse, are forced on women by men. Moreover, la Vieille's speech depicts marriage as primarily a safeguard against rape (217-8). Kay's views are very close to the argument articulated in Chapter Four of this thesis (77-137), in which I claim that la Vieille's speech reveals that the real problem underlying the misogynist tradition is male sexuality.

Charles Muscatine has studied la Vieille from the perspective of the influence this figure had on Chaucer's Wife of Bath. Muscatine views la Vieille, along with Ami's Mari Jaloux, as important components of Jean's realistic style which, for Muscatine, is clearly inherited from anti-feminist and anti-clerical satire (71). Such realism has meaning in context, and in the case of la Vieille, Muscatine argues, Jean takes realism beyond traditional satire and expands it to create "a sense of the round, complex existence of the speaker herself"(85). Such a view is insightful in that it

recognizes the complexity of la Vieille. Muscatine also sees the originality of Jean's use of his source material. While he did appropriate Ovid and the satirical tradition for much of la Vieille's speech, the result was a "combined complexity of form and richness of material that is foreign to any of Jean's models" (83). Muscatine also draws a relationship between the person of la Vieille and doctrines that she expounds. Insofar as la Vieille is an ex-prostitute with an "appetite for sex," and whose present state in the narrative is characterized by suffering for the loss of her youth and by a desire to take revenge on those who now scorn her, her "philosophy" is a direct extension of what she represents (93). While I agree with Muscatine's conclusions that Jean used his source material in a highly innovative way to create a Vieille who is more complex than her predecessors, I find his view that her philosophy is an extension of what she represents to be a limiting one. First, according to Muscatine's analysis, la Vieille "represents the twin positions of erotic materialism and uninhibited sensuality"(74). I will first take issue with the term "erotic materialism," since nowhere does he explain what this means specifically in relation to la Vieille. If this term refers to something along the lines of the physical aspect of love, which goes hand in hand with "uninhibited sensuality," I would argue that a critical analysis of her speech cannot be stopped short at this level. Stating that she "represents" these two positions works to oversimplify a character to whom Jean gave a "round, complex existence," as Muscatine himself has stated. It is important not to lose track of the motivations behind la Vieille's "erotic materialism" and "uninhibited sensuality": while they are part of a doctrine motivated by her life experience, her arguments in favor of them have wider implications. They point to the consequences of equating women with the body, with both its youthful beauty and the horrors of old age.¹¹

Building on the work of Muscatine, Lee Patterson discusses la Vieille's speech as part of an article in which he focuses mainly on Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*. (this is a revised version of Patterson's 1983 *Speculum* article, which was printed in Brownlee and Huot 1992). And to be fair to Muscatine, Patterson does point out that this critic was innovative with respect to his perception of gender issues, but that "gender issues were not part of the critical repertoire of the 1950s. (187) Patterson argues that the structural features of the *Rose* identified by Poirion¹² and others "provided Chaucer with a rhetorical structure, a *disposition*, that organizes much of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* and much of the *Canturbury Tales* as a whole," as well as a "precedent for privileging the subject." (187). He takes Muscatine's observations further to address the notion that neither discursive structures nor subjectivity itself are socially neutral phenomena, and in this way Patterson opens the possibilities for reading la Vieille's speech from many different perspectives, including a feminist perspective, by pointing out how the different themes that structure this speech play important roles in the allegory but also open up the possibility for the narrative of the poem to move forward. Whereas, many neopatristic critics see the story of la Vieille's past, the theme which constitutes the outer frame of the poem, as an element that problematizes the speaker's credibility, Patterson argues that this introduction of temporality into the poem is precisely what allows the action to move forward. Likewise, the structure of this speech, along with that of Ami, functions as a *dilation* of the rose bud. It is her subjectivity that would provide the precedent for Chaucer to construct such a controversial yet very human figure as the Wife of Bath. Patterson's reflections on the importance of the imbricated structure and introduction of temporality into the poem point to the need to take this portion of Jean's *Rose* more seriously, to push it further to see how temporality not only enriches the narrative but also opens the door to taking a closer look at allusions to

issues that were faced by the 13th-century Parisian society in which Jean de Meun composed his text.

Alan Gunn also views la Vieille beyond the traditional ironic reading. For Gunn, la Vieille's speech is an important part of the general *symposium* represented by the poem as a whole. La Vieille's portion is a crucial element because it introduces the problems that women face in love, thus making the debate more comprehensive and completing the *Mirouer aus Amoureux* (376). While Gunn recognizes the humor of la Vieille's speech and the potential for ironic readings, he also argues that Jean designed his text to have multiple meanings. A comparison of Raison's speech with la Vieille's shows, for example, that there exist many humorous and apparent contradictions between the doctrines of the two figures. Gunn indicates that there are many ways to interpret these differences when he writes, "These lines, of course, have a large humorous import: they provide, too, a delightfully ironic contrast to the more respectable discourses of Amors and Raison. At the same time, it would appear that Jean de Meun meant us to take them seriously as well as humorously: to look upon la Vieille as partly justified in her claim to recognize that she is indeed the 'head' of a school almost as important and with as many votaries as the schools of Raison or of Amors"(379-80). Gunn's analysis not only has the merit of recognizing the possibility of multiple levels of meaning for this speech beyond the ironic focus, but it also implies that the structure of her speech, which is modelled on the formal structure of the university lecture, along with her allusions to the world of the university from which she is so obviously excluded, lend themselves to further critical inquiry. What he has written in this regard invites further reflection:

And there is nothing quite to compare in Ovid with the passages in which la Vieille preens herself upon the value of her teachings. It is Jean de Meun and no antique source, that is responsible for the superb passage in which she makes her defiant gesture at “all the chancellors” (13504-13507), or for the one in which she claims the “Chair of Erotic Science” for herself (12815-12817). In continuing the conventions of the didactic-erotic tradition, Jean de Meun gave them a vital reality and an increased significance.”(382, n.160)

Gunn’s insights into la Vieille’s speech are illuminating, and yet, the passage quoted above only forms part of a footnote, since Gunn considered that developing it further in *The Mirror of Love* (1952), would interrupt “the analysis in the text of the course of the ‘grand debate’”(n.160, 382). The idea expressed here merits further elaboration, especially in light of Gunn’s claim that the allusions to the world of the university in la Vieille’s speech are unique to Jean’s text. Again, we are invited to read la Vieille from the perspective of Jean de Meun as innovator rather than faithful translator of his Latin sources.

While it would be inaccurate to say that critics have ignored la Vieille in Jean de Meun’s *Rose*, the paucity of published scholarly articles dedicated solely to her speech and her apparent secondary status in more extensive studies of the poem suggest that critics find her to be of only limited interest. This dissertation takes up the challenge to critics, launched by John Fleming in 1969, to take a closer look at the literary techniques employed by Jean de Meun in this speech.

Even beyond the literary techniques, the possible levels of meaning of la Vieille's speech and the often surprising issues raised by this figure have thus far been in a critical blind spot.

This blind spot can be discussed in reference to two lacunae regarding specific critical assumptions, one specifically about the *Rose* and another about medieval love literature in general. As for *Le Roman de la rose*, in-depth analyses of la Vieille's speech have never been undertaken. This is perhaps because readers fall prey to what Valerie Gretchen Angelo identifies as the response of the male-authored text to la Vieille's arguments (113). In other words, the reader identifies with the voice of the male poet/protagonist and complies with the textual attempts to undermine the voice of the female protagonist object. Thus, if the reader does not see la Vieille's arguments as invalid, she at least perceives them to be limited for the male poet/protagonist has indicated this by evoking the patriarchal assumptions about the bodies of old women. Such assumptions include the inappropriateness of such a body to a serious discussion of love and the rejection of that body as unsightly. As Angelo aptly points out in her thesis, all of the female figures of *Le Roman de la rose* are described in terms of their physical aspects (113). La Vieille is no exception, as she is described in terms of what she is wearing (12360-12361), where she is standing (12358-12359) and how her legs tremble when she runs up the stairs (12517-12519). What I seek to explore is what happens when readers refuse to go along with the male poet/protagonist. That is, they recognize and reject certain cultural assumptions at work. This brings me to the second problem, a more general one of reading medieval texts. The question I ask is in regards to how these assumptions structure a particular view of love, and how this view in turn influences the way we read medieval literature about love.

My work on la Vieille's speech relies on the work of all of the above-mentioned critics, whether I agree with their views or not, and to them I am heavily indebted. The work of Gunn, Poirion and Patterson, who discuss and identify the structural features of the *Rose*, especially the imbricated structure of the speeches, are particularly important here. Gunn identifies and analyses Jean de Meun's extensive use of *amplificatio* and argues that awareness of this device is key to helping a modern reader deal with what appears to be a digressive and disorganized text. Like Gunn, Poirion seeks to defend the *Rose* against the claims of critics, specifically C.S. Lewis, that the *Rose* is a disorganized work whose author is unskilled in narrative composition. Both Poirion and Gunn argue convincingly that *amplificatio* and *dilatio* are the keys that a modern reader needs to make sense of what appears to be a digressive text. Poirion's work enhances Gunn's analysis by describing a structural device that he calls "une composition concentrique de thèmes emboîtés" (a concentric composition of imbricated themes, my translation¹³). Poirion proposes an imbricated structure¹⁴ for the speeches of Ami and la Vieille and suggests the possibility of identifying one for Nature (p. 125). Like many *Rose* critics who have discussed this structure, Poirion views it a way to help modern readers deal with what appears to be a meandering narrative. By contextualizing this literary device, and demonstrating how it formed a part of a larger repertoire of rhetorical techniques from this time period, Poirion offers a convincing portrait of Jean de Meun as an adept and highly skilled writer. Lee Patterson, whose work on the *Rose* comes some 40 years after Gunn's and 15 years after Poirion's, was led to the *Rose* via his interest in Chaucer, and through his interest in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* he inevitably looked to la Vieille's speech. Patterson's work builds on Poirion's and uses this structure as a basis to suggest new ways of reading la Vieille's speech that more directly challenge ironic readings.

In this thesis I seek to build on the work of these three. First, I propose that the imbricated structure pointed out by Poirion and discussed by Patterson is actually much more widespread in the poem and may indeed be identified in all of the major speeches of Jean de Meun's portion, starting with Raison, then Ami, la Vieille, Nature and Genius. (See Table 1, Chapter 2, p.75). Second, with respect to the themes that structure these speeches, I have in some cases labeled them differently from other critics, most especially with respect to Jean de Meun's use of the Golden Age Myth. Central to the structure of each speech is some reference to the myth of the Golden Age, a time before laws concerning social and sexual behavior. This reference thus constitutes an echo among the speeches, and the meaning that can be attributed to each instance of this reference is situated, that is, it is contingent on the speaker as well as on the point that the speaker wishes to convey by citing it. The recurrence of such a theme inevitably destabilizes any pre-determined meaning it may have had or may have for any reader, whether modern or a contemporary of Jean de Meun. Third, given the paucity of scholarship dedicated to la Vieille's speech, I will propose a close reading of the entire speech, taking into account the detailed imbricated structure that I have identified. In this analysis, I propose a feminist reading strategy that builds on the work of Beltran, Patterson and Kay. Specifically, I first extend the analysis of the issue of temporality by delving into a more detailed articulation and analysis of the way in which the themes of this speech are structured as interlocking frames. To contextualize this structure, I also provide my own view of how all of the speeches of the other figures (Raison, Ami, Genius and Natur) are similarly structured. Second, I argue that it is no accident that Jean placed la Vieille's speech in the very center of his continuation, for this central position offers interpretive possibilities. In order to explore the possibility of surmounting this critical blindspot,

I now turn to a discussion of the views of two feminist critics whose work opens up new possibilities for reading both la Vieille's speech and medieval love literature.

4. New Perspectives

One element that is central to the development of a new approach to reading la Vieille's speech is a discussion of the love paradigm that subtends the *Rose*. While love is the major theme of the poem, it is rare to find critics stating specifically what we mean by love. And yet, a closer look at how the notion of love plays out in the *Rose* reveals that it functions according to a patriarchal paradigm. The recognition that the love described in medieval literature relies on a patriarchal model opens up new ways of reading these texts. There is indeed an identifiable connection between the way relationships develop between men and women and the patriarchal society within which they live. What we call love is not necessarily a natural development but rather one that is determined in part by patriarchal culture. Two perspectives that offer new ways of thinking about the love paradigm in literature are those of Ronnie Ancona and Gerda Lerner. Ancona, in *Time and the Erotic in Horace's Odes* (1994), brings to light the importance of accounting for the role of temporality in determining the perspective of the male poet/protagonist. By describing the role of temporality, Ancona provides readers the means to resist equating the male poet/protagonist with the universal human one. She identifies Horace's *Odes* a love paradigm that places the female beloved within temporality while the male lover remains outside of it. This paradigm, a patriarchal one, sets up a relationship within which the lover seeks to dominate the beloved. Gerda Lerner, in *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986)

enhances thinking about this love paradigm by bringing clarity to the question of what is meant by the term patriarchy. While Ancona identifies cultural assumptions that lead readers to comply with the values expressed by the male poet/protagonist, Lerner's work gives insight into the origin of those assumptions.

Ancona claims that temporality is indeed experienced differently by the male lover and the female beloved. For the male, it is experienced privately, i.e., whatever the effects of time may be on the male lover's body, this does not affect the way he is seen by others. For the female object of desire, or the beloved, it is a process which is experienced publicly from the onset of sexual maturation to the onset of the aging process. Ancona suggests that the focus on the aging female body in the *Odes* constitutes a strategy on the part of the lover to control temporality. Indeed, it is the effects of time on the female body that are deemed unworthy of and inappropriate to love. By making the old female body the locus of anxiety about his own temporality, the male poet/lover avoids dealing with it. Within this love paradigm, which subjects the beloved to the male gaze, the relationship of lover to the beloved is necessarily one of dominance. This same love paradigm is at work in both la Vieille's speech and in the sources that inform it. As I shall argue in Chapter Four, the failure of la Vieille's revolt against what she perceives to be an unfair deal for women stems from her entrapment within this patriarchal love paradigm.

The question of what we mean when we identify cultural assumptions as "patriarchal" is a valid one and requires a clear understanding of what is meant by this term. In her book on patriarchy,

Gerda Lerner argues that the reification of women's sexual function, and not of women as individuals, lies at the foundation of male control of female sexuality. She is careful to point out that this control of women's sexual function does not imply the direct control of women as individuals. Women have consistently carried out many different functions within various human communities throughout history and in many societies appear to enjoy a certain degree of freedom. However, upon further scrutiny of these different societies, it can be argued that women's sexual behavior has often been subject to the regulation and scrutiny of males, whereas the converse does not apply. In her discussion of the emergence of monotheism as evidenced by the Book of Genesis, Lerner writes that it is a "tragic accident of history that this advance occurred in a social setting and under circumstances that strengthened and affirmed patriarchy." (198) This is the point at which women became essentially excluded from the "process of symbol making" and thus marginalized (198). Women's sexuality as well as their relationship to a divine principle were both framed within the confines of patriarchal dominance and mediated through men. Lerner's analysis is useful in developing new thinking about la Vieille's speech, for implicit in her discussion is the question of how the language and history of patriarchy contribute to female subordination and oppression.

One important assumption that Lerner challenges is the popular notion that prostitution is "the oldest profession in the world." Such a notion indeed positions prostitution as a natural part of human communal existence. Not so, argues Lerner, who claims it developed directly out of the enslavement of women and the formation of classes. Far from being "free" to express her own sexuality, a prostitute is in the business of tailoring her sexuality to the needs of her male clients.

Such a view of prostitution not as a “natural” behavior but stemming from patriarchy has implications for readings of la Vieille’s speech, and the questions it raises are complex ones. In my close analysis of la Vieille’s speech in Chapter Four, I pinpoint the ways in which la Vieille calls into question the legitimacy of the patriarchal order. At the same time, la Vieille’s promotion of the art of prostitution can be viewed as an integral part of that order. Making use of the perspectives of both Ancona and Lerner, I argue that it is not la Vieille’s corporality that undermines her words, but rather, her revolt fails because of her entrapment within patriarchal language and the love paradigm it has produced.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a wide variety of *Rose* criticism and pinpointed some of the assumptions that have guided critical readings of this poem. In the case of la Vieille’s speech, one set of assumptions stems from the presumption that la Vieille is a character created according to a literary tradition, and that it suffices to know how these characters function generally in literary texts in order to understand the particular ones. Another set of assumptions originates from the fact that, as readers under patriarchy, male or female, we tend to internalize the point of view of the authoritative male narrator, who plays on cultural assumptions about the female body. It is these assumptions that, for example, make readers laugh at la Vieille and her views. However, when a reader resists the authority of the narrator, it is then possible to perceive la Vieille as a figure who undermines that authority. Modern readers have many critical tools available to them to explore new ways of reading medieval texts. Feminist criticism offers

keys to a deeper understanding of la Vieille's speech and of the *Rose* as a whole. One of the first steps in the articulation of a feminist analysis of la Vieille's speech is to situate this discourse as an integral part of the structure of the *Rose* rather than view it as an isolated "comic moment." In the following chapter, I show how the motif of the Golden Age myth creates important connections between la Vieille's speech and the discourses of all of the other figures.

¹ For a more detailed discussion of the evolution of *Rose* criticism from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, see Heather Arden, *Le Roman de la rose* (Boston: Twayne, 1987); Armand Strubel's Introduction to his 1990 edition of *Le Roman de la rose* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1992) 5-34.

² Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot, eds., *Rethinking the Roman de la Rose. Text, Image, Reception* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992) 2. I make use of Brownlee and Huot's categories here for the sake of convenience. However, as the reader will notice, critical thinking about this poem has become so complex and sophisticated that it is difficult to insert any one critic into a fixed category. Their areas of agreement loom just as large as their areas of disagreement.

³ I came to Stakel's book late in my project and due to time constraints cannot fully integrate her arguments into my work.

⁴ All line numbers refer to Félix Lecoy's three-volume edition of *Le Roman de la rose* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1966-1975).

⁵ E.g., Kelly's discussion of syllepsis, 108-10.

⁶ In his introduction to the documents of this debate, Eric Hicks points out that the affair probably involved more individuals than the five actors usually associated with this debate. Specifically, Hicks suggests the existence of several others who may have been very active participants but who left no written trace of their activity in the extant documents. Hicks, Eric, *Le Débat sur le Roman de la rose* (1977) XV-XVIII.

⁷ "Et encore ne puis me taire de ce, dont trop suis mal content: que l'office de Raison, laquelle il mesmes dit fille de Dieu, doy mectre avant telle parole et par maniere de proverbe comme je ay notee en ycellui chapitre, la ou elle dit a Amant que 'en la guerre amoureuse . . . vault mieulx decevoir que deceuz estre. Et vrayement je oze dire que la Raison maistre Jehan de Meun renia son Pere a cellui mot, car trop donna autre doctrine.' Hicks 14.

⁸ "Hahay! entre vous qui belles filles avéz et bien les desiréz a entreprendre a vie honneste, bailliéz leur, bailliéz et queréz *Le Rommant de la Rose* pour apprendre à discerner le bien du mal -- que dis je! mais le mal du bien! Et a quel utilité ne a quoy prouffite aux oyans tant oïr de laidures?" Hicks 15.

⁹ Thomas D. Hill, "La Vieille's Digression on Free Love: A Note on Rhetorical Structure in the *Romance of the Rose*" *Romance Notes* 8 (1966) 113-115; Luis Beltrán, "La Vieille's Past," *Romanische Forschungen* 84 (1972): 77-96; Chauncey Wood, "La Vieille, Free Love and Boethius in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Revue de littérature*

comparée 51 (1977): 336-342. Sarah Kay devotes two pages to la Vieille's speech in an article entitled "Women's Body of Knowledge: Epistemology and Misogyny in the *Romance of the Rose*" *Framing Medieval Bodie*, eds. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994) 211-35. In her discussion, Kay claims that the figure of Nature is "more philosophically interesting" than that of la Vieille (217). See also Maxwell Luria's discussion of la Vieille in *A Reader's Guide to the Romance of the Rose* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1982).

¹⁰ Many critics assume that la Vieille's arguments in favor of free love indicate that free reign should be given to illicit desire and irrational passion. In fact, la Vieille's entire speech revolves around teaching women how to "Amez des autres sagement" (13072) in order to accumulate wealth. The success of such strategies require women to maintain rational control over the management of their amorous liaisons. While such an endeavor may not be realistic, as la Vieille's own life story illustrates, la Vieille herself does not advise women to give free reign to amorous passion, but rather to fake such an attitude to further their own financial ends.

¹¹ See Beltrán 96.

¹² Poirion (1973, 123-127) proposed a specific structure for the speeches of Ami and la Vieille, and suggested that Nature's speech was also similarly structured. Patterson took up Poirion's work and in his 1983 article in *Speculum* suggests similar structures for the speeches of Ami, la Vieille and Nature. I have analyzed all of the major speeches (Raison, Ami, la Vieille, Nature and Genius) and have identified that this structure is at work in all of them (see Chapter 2, Table 1, p.74). The identification of this structure as a general organizing principle for Jean de Meun's continuation offers new possibilities for interpretation and also invites us to look more closely at la Vieille's position in the very center of the poem.

¹³ All translations in this text, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

¹⁴ I refer to this phenomenon as "imbricated structure."

Chapter 2: La Vieille's Speech and the Imbricated Structure of the *Rose*: The Example of the Golden Age Myth

1. The Theme of the Golden Age

The critical blindspot surrounding la Vieille's speech that I identified in Chapter 1 stems in part from a tendency to focus on the limits of this speech rather than its complexities. One way to modify this view is to identify and describe its intricate connections to the speeches of Raison, Ami, Nature and Genius. There is one important theme that links all of the speeches, that of the Golden Age myth. Not only does this theme appear in the speeches of all of the figures listed above, but it also forms part of a highly structured pattern which I call an imbricated structure (see Table 1 p. 75). A close look at each structure reveals that rather than a digressive, chaotic text, we have thematic transitions that follow an imbricated pattern. That is, certain themes are framed within others.¹ The Golden Age is just as carefully integrated into the structure of la Vieille's speech as it is in all of the others, and this raises the question of how the different readings of this tale fit together. There are two structural features of la Vieille's speech that link it to all of the others: 1) the imbricated structure of la Vieille's speech follows a pattern similar to that of all of the other speeches (see Table 1, p. 75) and 2) the theme of the Golden Age serves as a frame for the central theme of la Vieille's speech, women's freedom. The importance of la Vieille's allusions to this myth has not yet been recognized by critics, and this motivates my choice to compare la Vieille's discussion of it to those of Raison, Ami, Nature and Genius.

Table 1 (p. 75) illustrates how the theme of the Golden Age forms a part of the structure of each speech. When I refer to this theme, I mean the Golden Age broadly conceived, that is, including the story of the castration of Saturn which ends the Golden Age and the subsequent decline in human relationships that follow. The stages of this decline are known as the Silver, Bronze and Iron ages. When I speak of the Golden Age myth then, I refer to this larger story, of which there existed many well-known written accounts in the Middle Ages.²

By having all of his figures cite identifiable written texts for their version of this tale, Jean emphasizes them as readers. Raison states at the end of her reference to the Golden Age, “car li livres le dit issi” (“for the book tells it that way”, 5512). In their editions of the *Rose*, both Langlois (tome ii, note 5537-42, 344) and Lecoy (tome i, note 5512, 283) suggest that Raison’s use of the term *li livres* refers to one of the mythographies that existed in Jean de Meun’s time. Ami notes towards the beginning of his version of this tale, “si con la letre le tesmoigne” (‘as the letter/text testifies/bears witness’, 8327). Langlois (tome iii, note 8355-8402) identifies two sources for Ami’s version of the Golden Age: Book I of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, II, Meter v. La Vieille cites Horace as her authority (13887) and draws from the *Satires*. Nature identifies her source as Virgil’s *Bucolics* (19133-19146) while Genius names the *Georgics* as his source (20085-20086).

These allusions to specific books establish the *Rose* within a tradition of learned literature in Latin. By situating his poem within this line of texts, Jean identifies his work as a continuation of that tradition, in spite of the fact that it is written in the vernacular. There is an important

connection to be made between the motif of the Golden Age myth and the situation of the *Rose* within a learned literary tradition. Genius makes clear in his speech that writing, and therefore texts, was an art form that developed as a result of the end of the Golden Age. The Golden Age myth, then, is the narrative of the beginning of human time, for it was with the loss of the Golden Age that human beings fell into time. Paul Ricoeur claims that time, as human time, can only be expressed through narrative, and that narrative itself is a condition of temporal existence. The Golden Age myth, then, not only marks the beginning of temporal existence, but its narrative form also contributes to the creation of human time. The connection between the evocation of the Golden Age myth in the *Rose* and the text's identification of itself as a part of a long literary tradition situates the *Rose* as a direct descendant within a literary lineage that dates back to human prehistory. As the text reflects on itself as text, it seems to indicate that it is not only deeply rooted in the great literary traditions of the past, but also that all future writing will descend from its line.

La Vieille introduces human time into the narrative of the *Rose* through the story of her past, a theme which constitutes the outer frame of her speech (see Table 1, p. 75). She is a figure who is within time, indeed, she embodies the notion that time will ultimately bring about old age and death. Moreover, her reference to the Golden Age is different from those of the other figures in that she does not refer to the Golden Age *per se*, but rather, to some later period after its decline. Her cited source, Horace's *Satires I*, 3, makes no direct mention of the Golden Age myth, but rather recounts how humans fought many wars until language developed, allowing them to create laws and therefore order. However, when la Vieille appropriates Horace's text, she tells this

same tale using language that echoes the Golden Age myth as told in the other speeches. Most notably, she uses the adverb *jadis* (in former times) three times (13877; 13883; 13893) during her discussion of the origin of marriage laws. This echoes Ami's use of this term at the beginning of his version of this tale ("Jadis, au tens des prumiers peres/ E de noz prumeraines meres," 8325-8326). La Vieille's discussion of the Golden Age myth serves as a frame for the central theme of her speech, women's freedom. The source for her allusion to this tale (Horace's *Satires* I, 3) narrates the development of written laws, but nowhere does Horace specifically mention marriage laws. It is la Vieille who brings up this theme, claiming that marriage laws were established in order to prevent men from killing one another over women, raping women and abandoning their offspring. What la Vieille does in her appropriation of the *Satires* is to move from a description of the general to an interpretation of the specific. She reads Horace's text to mean that laws, specifically marriage laws, developed from a need to control male aggression. By doing so, she problematizes the authority of those laws and further develops the theme that marriage is an imperfect solution to a male problem in her discussion of women's freedom.

As I describe in more detail in Chapter 4, la Vieille is an audacious reader of texts that have been reproduced and interpreted within the context of the exclusively male academic tradition. By presenting a female perspective she brings to light issues that have been ignored by male-centered reading practices. For this reason, it is interesting to see the other references to the Golden Age through the lens of la Vieille's speech. Her reading of Horace offers a response to Raison's use of this myth to illustrate and promote academic reading practices. In addition, la

Vieille also provides a counter-argument to Ami's use of this tale to undermine the God of Love's commandment to honor and serve all women. La Vieille's unconventional reading of Horace also paves the way for a new look at the speeches of Nature and Genius. In the final section of Chapter 4 I give considerable attention to the relationships of these two interlocutors. I argue that Genius, a figure associated with male sexuality, corrupts Nature's noble view of her plan. This becomes particularly apparent when we compare Nature's reference to the Golden Age to that of Genius. I conclude by arguing that the corruption of Nature's voice is achieved through the production of misogynous discourses. Therefore, if la Vieille's evocation of the Golden Age myth calls into question the legitimacy of male dominance in marriage, Nature's and Genius's speeches illustrate the extent to which misogynous discourse functions to conceal male flaws.

2. Raison

One important connection between the speeches of Raison and la Vieille turns around the problem of reading and interpretation. The Golden Age myth functions in Raison's speech to highlight the proper way to read, that is, according to the university model. This involves a two-step process that formed a regular part of the university curriculum: cursory ("*cursorie*") and ordinary ("*ordinaire*") reading. The former consisted of presenting the surface meaning of the text without discussing the problems it raised, and the latter required the development of new ideas and the exposition of old ones. Although students of medieval universities were required to learn both reading techniques, ordinary reading was clearly considered to be superior to cursory reading. As John Marenbon points out, in medieval universities, "texts read were texts expounded" (16-17).³

Raison evokes this university model of reading when she offends Amant by using the word *coilles* (testicles) in her retelling of the Golden Age myth (5506-5520). Raison's version of this myth specifically focuses on the castration of Saturn and the subsequent birth of Venus from his testicles when they fell into the sea. This forms part of the proof that Amant had demanded of her to support her claim that Love is superior to Justice.⁴ Raison defends her use of the term *coilles* by stating that she names "noble things" with "plain text" and does not gloss them as Amant suggested she do by substituting a euphemistic term (6907-6911). She responds that she was speaking metaphorically in any case (7123-7127). Raison's view of reading is not only limited to the university model, but she also speaks in terms of good and bad readers. When viewed from the perspective of la Vieille's speech, this model can be shown to be limited insofar as it is a male-centered one.

To borrow a term used by Judith Fetterly (1978), Raison is an "immasculated reader," i.e., a female reader who has been trained to identify with the male perspective even if this means denying that which her female experience could bring to the interpretation of a text. This is best revealed by her exemplum of the tale of Croesus and Phanie (6459-6592). Through this tale, Raison demonstrates the superiority of Phanie's interpretation of her father's dream in relation to her father's literal reading of it ("à la lettre"). Phanie's gloss is an ordinary reading because it seeks to uncover the meaning veiled by the allegorical imagery. Croesus' interpretation, on the other hand, represents a cursory reading.

The exemplum of Croesus and Phanie is but one of several tales Raison cites to illustrate the vagaries of fortune. When she begins to conclude this discussion, she recalls the tales she told of great men brought down by adverse fortune (6711-6746). Her lesson is clearly aimed at both men and women, for she takes care to mention at this point the stories of two women who were also subject to a reversal of fortune: Hecuba, wife of King Priam, and Sisicambris, mother of King Darius.⁵ While this move constitutes a strategy designed to give her lecture a more universal appeal, when viewed through the prism of la Vieille's speech it becomes clear that Raison does not acknowledge the gender dynamics of the tales she tells. Unlike la Vieille, who challenges the universal appeal of Horace's narration of the development of written laws when she points out that marriage laws were made in the interest of men, Raison presents the tale of Croesus and Phanie as a universal warning whose meaning is obvious for all people.

But does such a tale send a truly universal warning? The question to ask here is whether readers in a patriarchal culture all interpret the tale in the same way, or could the response differ according to the gender of the reader? I suggest that the tale does not warn all people, but rather, all empowered males, of the disastrous consequences of an overzealous pursuit of power. It was, after all, Croesus' pursuit of power that led to his demise. Likewise, the other tales involving men, those of Nero, Manfred, Conradin and Henry, illustrate the dangers inherent in the excessive ambitions of men. The two stories of female victims of changing fortune do not fit the same pattern as the tales of the male victims. Both Hecuba and Sisicambris are royal women who are captured by the enemy during wars fought among men. Moreover, both women survive their turn of fortune rather than allowing it to destroy them.

By using all of these tales as exempla to illustrate the fickleness of fortune, Raison ignores the gender dynamics that la Vieille brings out in her tales of women. For while talking about fortune, Raison unwittingly illustrates the problems brought about when men seek to dominate through war or through excessive pursuit of power. A closer look at all of these tales reveals that while they certainly illustrate turns of fortune, they are also about male aggression.

It is Raison's evocation of the Golden Age myth and the subsequent defense of her use of the term "coilles" that helps readers associate her with the university model of reading. Even though she applies this model correctly, she fails in her ultimate goal of convincing Amant to abandon his pursuit of the rose. This is perhaps because Raison's arguments do not take into account the complexity of lived experience. It is la Vieille who brings in this perspective in her rereadings of academic texts.

3. Ami

Ami's lesson comes from Ovid's *Art of Love*, and his evocation of the Golden Age myth is a strategy that becomes necessary to his success when Amant objects to the hypocrisy he is preaching. In his portrait of le Jaloux, he creates an association between women's clothing and sin. He presents here a very negative image of women as grasping and materialistic, all the

while claiming that the purpose of this portrait is to demonstrate that male dominance in marriage is incompatible with love. This argument functions as a covert strategy he uses to convince Amant that he should not obey the commandments of the God of Love to honor and serve all women. This portrait of le Jaloux creates a shift in the text from the courtly love paradigm, in which women are placed on a pedestal, to one which portrays them as greedy and scheming. Through his references to the Golden Age myth, Ami succeeds in incorporating into the discourse deceptive strategies that subvert the ideals of the God of Love's commandments. La Vieille's speech offers a response to this shift by turning the tables on misogynous discourse. In order to grasp how la Vieille does this, it is important to understand how the Golden Age myth functions in Ami's speech.

Ami's first reference to this myth occurs as part of his argument that a lover should not spend too much money in order to obtain sexual favors, for small gifts will do just as well (8325--8424). The second reference forms part of a discussion of the origins of poverty and earthly rulers (9463--9648). The first reference is part of a lament that today's love is no longer free, but rather, costs money, time and effort to obtain:

Jadis soloit estre autrement,

or va tout par enpirement.

Jadis, au tens des prumiers peres

et de noz prumereines meres,

si con la letre le tesmoigne,
par cui nous savons la besoigne,
furent amors leaus et fines,
sanz covoitise et sanz rapines,
et li siecles mout precieus.

II. 8323--8331

(Formerly, it was different,/ now everything is going from bad to worse./
Formerly, in the days of our first fathers/ and of our first mothers,/ as the
letter bears witness/ from which we know of these things,/ love was loyal
and pure/ without greed or theft/ and these were very good times.)⁶

Ami's lament for a lost age when love was free comes on the heels of a detailed lesson to Amant on how to win over the the guardians of the rose through small gifts and lavish promises (8167-8226). In his lesson, Ami emphasizes the importance of material wealth in the successful pursuit of love. If a man is very wealthy, he can take the path of "trop doner" (7857-7890) and never need his advice. If he is not, he must employ the strategies of deceit that Ami outlines. The passage cited above introduces a lengthy description of an ideal pastoral world where men and women loved freely and took from the earth only what they needed to live. This idealized world sharply contrasts with the cynical advice that precedes it. Ami's reference in the above passage to "la letre" (8327) as a source for his reference places this myth within the tradition of

authoritative texts and designates Ami as a reader of them. Just as Raison (see pp. 58-63) brings up the Golden Age myth in order to convince Amant to heed her advice, so does Ami use it to make his argument more persuasive in Amant's eyes.

Ami's speech resists easy interpretation because it is a blend of Ovid, cynical in his own right, and Christian idealism. When Ami draws heavily on Boethius' *Consolatio* for his discussion of Fortune, and on the Golden Age myth for his discussion of contemporary marriage, his words strongly echo those of Raison. However, the context within which they appear gives them a new resonance. It is important to bear in mind that Ami's main objective is to have Amant accept his advice on how to play the game of love, but his blatant cynicism proves unpalatable to Amant, whose commitment to the commandments of Amors remains intact. He strongly objects to such advice:

Douz amis, qu'est ce que vos dites?

Nus hom, si n'iert faus ypocrites,

ne feroit ceste deablie,

n'onc ne fu greigneur establee.

ll.7765-7768

(Sweet friend, what are you saying?/ No man, unless he were a false hypocrite,/ would ever do this wickedness,/ nor was a greater one [wickedness] ever started.)

When Amant objects to this art of deception, Ami seeks a new way to gain the confidence of his now resistant interlocutor. His speech at this point turns to a discussion of wealth and poverty, specifically, the hardships of poverty and techniques for avoiding it. It is necessary, he claims, to give small, inexpensive gifts, such as fruit, to overcome the guardians of the rose. At the end of the discussion of poverty, Ami elaborates a list of fruits that can serve as small gifts. Later on, in his description of what men and women ate during the Golden Age, a similar list of fruits reappears. An illustration of the word echoes between the two descriptions appears below:

Ami (good gifts)

Il affiert bien que l'en present
de fruiz nouveaux un biau present
en touailles ou en paniers,
de ce ne soiez ja laniers.

Poumes, poires, noiz ou cerises,
cormes, prunes, freses, merises,
chastaignes, quoinz, figues, vinetes,
pesches, parmainz, ou alietes,
nefles entees ou framboises,
beloces, davesnes, jorroises,
resins nouveaux leur envaiez,
et des mores fresches aiez; [...]

ll.8177-8189

(It is fitting that one present/ fresh fruit as

Ami (Golden Age)

[...]il cuilloient es bois les glandes
por pains, por chars et por poissons,
et cerchoient par ces boissons,
par vaus, par plains et par montaignes

pomes, poires, noiz et chastaignes,
boutons et meures et pruneles,
framboises, freses et ceneles,
feves et pois et tex chousetes
con fruiz, racines et herbetes;
et des espiz des blez frotoient,
et des resins as chans grapoient,
sanz metre en pressoërs n'en esnes.

ll.8334-8345

[...]n the woods they would gather acorns/

a good gift/ wrapped in a cloth or in a	for their bread, meat and fish/ and sought in
basket;/ one should never hesitate to do	these woods,/ through valleys, through
this./ <u>Apples</u> , <u>pears</u> , <u>nuts</u> or cherries,/	plains and through mountains/ <u>apples</u> ,
sorb fruit, <u>plums</u> , <u>strawberries</u> , wild	<u>pears</u> , <u>nuts</u> and <u>chestnuts</u> ,/ rose hips and
cherries./ <u>chestnuts</u> , quinces, figs,	<u>mulberries</u> and <u>little plums</u> / <u>raspberries</u> ,
barberries,/ peaches, large pears, or	<u>strawberries</u> and hawthorn berries,/ beans
service berries/ grafted medlars or	and peas and such littles things/ as fruits,
<u>raspberries</u> ,/ wild plums, plums or horse	roots and herbs:/ and they ground ears of
plums,/ send them fresh <u>grapes</u> ,/ and have	wheat/ and gathered <u>grapes</u> in the fields,/
plenty of fresh <u>mulberries</u> on hand;)[...]	without putting them in presses or crushing
	them.)

These two passages create an internal echo within this speech. Ami has transposed the list of reasonable gifts from the first portion of his discourse into the discussion of the Golden Age myth, where it takes on a new resonance. In this new context, the echo of the cynical Ovidian advice on how to obtain a woman's favors cheaply is now associated with the more virtuous values of the Golden Age, an ideal world where needs were simple and women did not ask for material compensation in exchange for sex. As such, Ami's advice becomes more palatable to Amant.

Ami must use subtle means to demonstrate to Amant that fidelity and lavish gift-giving are not part of the love experience in its original, *ideal* state. By painting an image of corrupted love in

the fallen world through the portrait of le Jaloux, he does not openly undermine the validity of the God of Love's commandment to honor all women, but rather covertly degrades the courtly image of women by associating them with greed, deceit, and vanity.

Ami claims that his purpose in describing le Jaloux to Amant is to provide him with a model of how men should not act towards their wives. He states that love and dominance are incompatible and that it is male dominance in modern marriages that has made them loveless. The image of le Jaloux seeking a tyrannical control over his wife (who is speechless throughout) contrasts sharply with the reference to the Golden Age, in which people love freely and which also serves as a frame for this portrait. This frame creates a contrast between the simple life of the Golden Age and le Jaloux's description of the excessive vanity of women in the contemporary world. His frequent use of the Old French word for gold (*or*) further accentuates this contrast. One example of this can be seen in le Jaloux's list of his wife's finery, which turns into a diatribe against what he perceives to be female excess (9241-9257). The sheer length and number of details in this list reveal his preoccupation with these objects he scorns so much. In this passage there are six specific allusions to gold. In addition, the Old French word *or*, meaning "now," also appears once (9247-9248) as part of a homonymic rhyming couplet that emphasizes the double meaning of the Old French word. Le Jaloux emphasizes gold not only as an object of ornamentation, but also as a form of currency (9256-9257). He also refers here to three different types of headwear: head pieces, coifs, and ribbons. He mentions not just mirrors, but ivory mirrors, an object of no small significance since in the late Middle Ages, mirrors and mirror cases carved in ivory often displayed scenes of lovers (Robertson 192). Moreover, the mirror

and head pieces recall Amant's description of Oiseuse in Guillaume's portion of the *Rose*, when she first opens the door of the garden (549-557). Guillaume's description of Oiseuse is echoed in le Jaloux's tirade against his wife and her fineries in that both place emphasis on gold objects, both draw attention to hair and hair pieces, and both refer to mirrors as part of this finery. The difference is that Guillaume's narrator is awe-struck by the splendor of Oiseuse while le Jaloux rants and raves about what he sees, reducing all it to female excess.

The effect of all this language of excess on the reader is to chip away at the positive view of female ornamentation that is part of the courtly love paradigm elaborated in Guillaume's portion of the *Rose*. In contrast to Guillaume's description of the elegance of Oiseuse, le Jaloux places emphasis on the cost of women's fineries. Moreover, he claims that it is not only a barrier to his sexual enjoyment of his wife's body but also threatens his control of her sexuality. In this diatribe against women's clothing can be heard echoes of both patristic writings on this topic and anti-marriage literature.⁷ Le Jaloux's interpretation of these texts represents a literal reading of them out of context, producing a portrayal of women's clothing as both sign and instrument of sin.

All of this is set within the framework of the Golden Age myth, and Ami's version of this tale describes a time when human needs were simple. With regards to clothing, Ami claims that people wore animal skins ("queurs veluz," 8356) and made clothing from undyed wool ("et fesoient robes des laines,/ sanz taindre en herbes ne en graines," 8357-8385). This image of a pure and simple life contrasts sharply with le Jaloux's description of the materialism of women,

and it is this contrast that begins to erode Amant's strict commitment to all of the commandments of the God of Love.

La Vieille's discussion of hair trouble and clothing provides a direct response to the tyrannical diatribes of le Jaloux. A significant portion of la Vieille's advice on how to play the game of love involves the importance of clothing and hair. There is a striking similarity between the behavior la Vieille advises women to adopt and le Jaloux's complaint that his wife dresses up only to display herself to other men in public places. These similarities are illustrated below:

<u>Le Jaloux</u>	<u>La Vieille</u>
Por ce portent eus les cointises	Sovent aille a la mestre <u>iglise</u>
aus <u>queroles</u> et aus <u>iglises</u> ,	et face visitacions
car ja nule ce ne feïst	a nocés, a processions,
s'el cuidast qu'an la veïst	a geus, a festes, a <u>queroles</u> ,
et que par ce plus tost pleüst	car en tex leus tient ses escoles
a ceus que decevoir peüst.	et chante a ses deciples messe
ll. 9003-9008	le dex d'Amors et la deesse.*
	ll.13492-13498

(This is the reason they wear such	(She should often go to the main church/
finery/ to round dances and to	and should go visiting/ at weddings and at
churches/because nobody would ever do	processions,/ at games, feasts and round
this/ unless she thought that she would	dances,/ for in these places the god of love
be seen/ and that by doing this she	holds his school/ and sings mass to his
would please sooner/ those she could	disciples/along with the goddess.)
deceive.)	

*Poirion = Li dieu d'Amors et les deesses

Both *le Jaloux* and *la Vieille* evoke the practice of dressing up for public occasions and both view it as a form of hypocrisy and deceit women that use to further their own ambitions rather than to show respect for the occasion. The difference between their points of view lies in the value they attach to the behavior. *Le Jaloux* adopts the stance of moral indignation, which serves as a cover for his sexual jealousy. When he complains that his wife wears her finery (“cointises”) to round dances (“queroles”) and churches (“iglis”) (these are the terms that are repeated), his complaints echo the patristic writings on the sin of female pride and his exaggerated disdain for women and their clothing represents a literal reading of patristic discourse. As for *la Vieille*, her speech celebrates clothing and accessories, for they allow even ugly women to construct a pleasing appearance and from this to accumulate capital (and power)

for themselves. La Vieille's views on clothing recall le Jaloux's evocation of patristic discourse but in her speech, since discourse on women's clothing is disconnected from the discourse on sin, la Vieille is able to describe self-adornment as a legitimate strategy that brings women money and power in a patriarchal world.

Her advice on how a woman can make herself attractive in public also reveals a more dreadful social reality and is connected to the scene in Ami's speech in which le Jaloux beats his wife:

Et s'ele voit dechoair
dout grant deaus seroit a voair,
les biaux crins de sa teste blonde,
ou s'il covient que l'en les tonde,
por aucune grande maladie,
dout biautez est toste enledie,
ou s'il avient que par courrouz
les ait aucun ribauz touz rouz
si que de ceus ne puisse ovrer,
por grosses treces recouvrer,
face tant que l'en li aporte

cheveux de quelque fame morte,

ou de saie blonde borreaus,

et boute tout en ses fourreaus.

II. 13253--13265

(And if she were to see fall/ (which would be a great sadness to see)/ the beautiful
locks of her blond head,/or if her head has been shaved/ because of some serious
illness/ that has tarnished her beauty,/ or if it happens that out of anger/ some
fellow has torn them all out/ such that she cannot work with them,/ to bring back
her thick braids/ she should have someone bring her/ the hair of some dead
woman,/ or pads of yellow silk,/to stuff them her hairnets.)

La Vieille's advice, on its surface level, concerns the everyday problem of keeping hair attractively styled. Nonetheless, she refers here to more serious problems women faced in the thirteenth century: disease, domestic violence, and early death (since it can be assumed that in order to replace her blond locks, she would need to cut hair from the corpse of a young woman). The rhetorical strategy of placing disease, domestic violence, and early death together in a discussion of hair, paints a picture of a world in which such devastating events were as commonplace as hair trouble. The reference by la Vieille to a woman having her hair torn out by a man also echoes the scene in Ami's speech where le Jaloux pulls out his wife's hair as he beats her:

Lors la prent espoir de venue
cil qui de mautalant tressue
par les treces et sache et tire,
ront les cheveux et descire
le jaloux, et seur li s'aourse,
por noiant fust lions seur ourse,
et par tout l'ostel la traïne
par courrouz et par ataïne
et la ledange malement;
ne ne veust, por nul serement,
recevoir excusacion,
tant est de male entencion,
ainz fiert et frape et roille et maille
cele qui bret et crie et baille
et fet sa voiz voler au venz
par fenestres et par auvenz
et tout quan qu'el set li reprouche,

si con il li vient a la bouche,
devant les voisins qui la vienent,
qui por fous ambedeus les tienent,
et la li tolent a grant paine
tant qu'il est a la grosse alaine.

II. 9331--9352

(Then perhaps he, who is sweating from rage, takes her straightaway/by
the braids and pulls and tugs,/ breaks and tears her hair,/this Jealous
Husband, and he attacks her furiously/as ever a lion attacked a bear,/and
throughout the house he drags her/in anger and rage/and basely insults
her/and does not want for any oath whatsoever/to hear any excuses,/so evil
are his intentions,/but he punches and hits and beats and strikes her/who
cries and screams/and sends her voice sailing on the winds/through
windows and across rooftops,/ and all the while she reproaches him/ with
whatever words come to her mouth/ in front of the neighbors who come
there/ and take both of them to be crazy/ and take her away from him with
much effort / when he is out of breath.)

Ami describes here a scene of domestic violence in which le Jaloux seizes his wife by her braids
(*treces*) and tears them (*ront et descire*), then beats and insults her out of anger and rage (*par*

corrouz et par ataine). In la Vieille's text on hair and make-up, her reference to a woman losing her hair recalls this scene from Ami's speech through a type of echo play. In both texts, the woman who wears her hair in *treces* has them torn out at the hands of an angry man. Both figures use a form of the verb "rompre"; the past participle "rouz" is used by la Vieille and in Ami's speech the present tense "rout". Indeed, it seems that la Vieille's advice on how to remedy such a hair problem picks up the story where Ami left off, but when it resurfaces in la Vieille's speech, all the emphasis is placed on the horrible consequences of male violence.

4. Nature and Genius

It is important to examine Nature's and Genius's speeches as one unit for three reasons: 1) Genius's speech, often referred to as Genius's *Sermon*, was dictated to him by Nature, an element that poses the question of voice; 2) on two occasions, Genius intervenes in Nature's speech in a substantial manner, adding a total of 448 lines to a text most often termed as Nature's *Confessio*; and 3) with respect to the way in which the two speeches are structured thematically, Genius's *Sermon* closely mirrors Nature's *Confessio*.

Both figures cite Virgil as the source of their versions of the Golden Age myth. Nature cites the *Bucolics* (19125-19146) and associates the return of the Golden Age with the birth of Christ. Moreover, she marvels that Christ was born to a virgin (19125-19132), claiming that she would have been incapable of creating a new life in this way. Nature's evocation of the Golden Age

myth is set within the second half of the outer frame of her speech, her plaint against man. It is significant that her major complaint stems from his failure to use his reproductive organs properly. That is, man is more interested in the pleasure of sex than in its procreative function. When she marvels at the virgin birth, she celebrates the possibility that reproduction could take place without the presence of a male. Genius also cites Virgil as the source of his version of the Golden Age and brings up this theme towards the end of his speech. However, he lets the reader know that rather than citing the *Bucolics*, as Nature did, he is citing Virgil's *Georgics*: "Et, si condit an *Georgiques*/cil qui nous escrit *Bucoliques*[...]" (And as the one who wrote the *Bucolics* for us said in the *Georgics*,/[...]) (20085-20086).

Genius's indirect identification of Virgil as "the one who wrote the *Bucolics*" recalls Nature's reference to this text (20085-20086). However, Genius's reference to the *Georgics* moves away from Nature's view of Virgil as a pre-Christian author to another version of the Golden Age myth by the same author, one which emphasizes Jupiter's castration of Saturn. Genius's retelling of this mythical castration leads to a general discussion of castration in the contemporary world, which then leads to a diatribe against women:

Granz pechiez est d'ome escoillier.

Anseurquetout cil qui l'escoille

ne li tost pas, sans plus, la coille

ne s'amie que tant a chiere,

don ja mes n'avra bele chiere,
ne sa moillier, car c'est du mains,
mes hardemant et meurs humains
qui doivent estre en vaillanz homes;
car escoillié, certain en somes,
sunt couart, pervers et chenins,
por ce qu'il ont meurs femenins.

II. 20020-20030

(A great sin it is to castrate a man./ And above all, anyone who castrates
him/ does not only rob him of his testicles and nothing more,/ nor of his
lady friend whom he holds so dear/ and whose beautiful face he will never
have,/ nor of his wife, for these are the least,/ but of boldness and human
ways,/ which must exist in valiant men/ because we are certain that
castrated men are cowardly, perverse, and mean/ because they have
feminine ways.)

In spite of the fact that the context of Genius's discussion concerns the condemnation of
castration, a violent act in which women do not necessarily to participate,⁸ he still manages to
shift into a misogynous discourse, a move that is so characteristic of this figure that it can hardly

be gratuitous. Indeed, it would seem that Genius seeks to turn any discussion of male flaws into tirades against the nature of women. This first occurs when Nature begins her plaint against man (16219-64) and, in tears, turns to Genius to request that he hear her confession. Genius uses the fact that she is crying to launch a discussion of the emotional instability of women, which leads to a caustic description of the dangers inherent in revealing secrets to them (16242-76).

Throughout her speech, Nature often allows Genius to shift the focus of the discussion from men to women.

As Nature's speech ends and Genius's sermon begins, it is difficult to know whose voice is being heard. This ambiguity stems from the fact that it is Nature who dictates to Genius the message that he is to bring to the God of Love and his barons (19369-19380). During Nature's confession, Genius interrupts her twice to complain about women. What does this tendency to interrupt Nature imply about Nature's message as delivered by Genius? I suggest that Genius alters Nature's text in such a way as to focus exclusively on male sexuality rather than any other aspect of her divine plan. This shift of focus from men's to women's failings is most apparent in the change that occurs when the source for the Golden Age myth switches from the *Bucolics* in Nature's speech to the *Georgics* in Genius's. While Virgil is the author of both cited works, there is a shift here from Nature's focus on the miracle of the virgin birth to Genius's obsession with the male sexual organs. In his speech, this focus leads to a lengthy discussion of castration, in which he makes clear his conviction that a castrated man will lose the love of his lady friend or wife and, worst of all, will take on the inferior moral traits of women. This elaborate discussion of castration in the context of the Golden Age calls to mind Raison's evocation of this

myth and her use of the term *coilles*, which elicited a reproach from Amant for what he claimed to be impolite language (6898-6901). By the end of the narrative, Amant manifests no such reaction to Genius's frequent use of this word: the noun *couillons* (testicles) is used twice, *la coille* is used once, and various forms of the verb *escoillier* (to castrate) are used eight times (*escoilliez*-castrated, *escoillierres* and *escoilleür* - castrator(s)) in these 45 lines on Saturn's castration (20007-20052). Genius's repetition of a term which at the beginning of Jean's portion of the poem caused a rift between Raison and Amant probably elicited more than a few laughs from Jean's contemporary reading public. Nonetheless, in addition to the humor, this passage also crystallizes the image of castration as more than just a minor detail in the poetic decor: rather, it is a recurring motif.

Castration is associated with the end of the Golden Age and the chaos that resulted from it. Within the context of this myth, the birth of Venus from Saturn's testicles when they fell into the sea represents a new era of desire separated from the control of the ruling body. Like desire, narrative is also a product of this fall, one whose function is to restore order to the chaos resulting from unrestrained desire, which is gendered female. At the same time, Genius argues that castrated men are no longer male but female and take on feminine faults (20020-20030). Through a network of associations, women come to represent the Fall: their bodies mirror those of castrated men and the desire that wreaked havoc on humanity is associated with their gender through the figure of Venus. Genius's evocation of the adultery of Venus and Mars (18063-18099) or his story of the wife trying to elicit secrets from her husband in bed (16317-16564) are all narratives that illustrate the idea that women will seek control if they themselves are not

restrained. This control of women is achieved through narratives that claim to know female nature based on the authority of previous written texts. It is, ironically, through the appropriation of authoritative texts that the art of narrative becomes difficult to control much like human sexuality. Writing and rewriting can be likened to the original castration of Saturn, which gave rise to desire separated from the ruling body. Like fallen sexuality, or desire separated from the ruling body, a citation separated from its original context creates an instability of meaning because each reading of it adapts the text in a different way.

Between the moment when Genius records Nature's message in writing and the time he delivers it, Nature gives up control of her own voice. Genius seems to take over this voice, not only while she is speaking but also in his delivery of her message. His characteristic obsession with male sexuality, particularly the male sexual organs, shifts from the balanced view of Nature's larger plan of regeneration of the different species to an unbalanced view that focuses on the male genitals. Indeed, it is male sexuality that corrupts Nature's noble view of her plan, but the acknowledgement of this corrupting force is constantly deferred by the digressions into misogynous discourses that associate women with the consequences of the Fall. When viewed in light of la Vieille's reading of the Golden Age myth, in which she identifies male sexuality as the real problem addressed by marriage laws, it becomes clear that the misogynous discourse in Genius's speech serves as a cover for the same problem.

5. Conclusion

Many themes are discussed between Raison's arrival on the scene and the moment when Genius throws down his burning torch (20640), but the Golden Age myth is one of the most important threads that winds its way in and out of the different speeches. Each character proposes a new reading and use of this myth, like so many reflecting surfaces sending forth various images of the same object. It is through a close look at the way in which the Golden Age theme constitutes an important part of the structure of each speech that readers can discover the different speakers as rewriters of the other speeches, thus problematizing meaning. While la Vieille's speech does its share of distorting, it also reveals some unrecognized truths. The appropriation made of the Golden Age myth in her speech, the evocation of the origins of marriage, destabilizes the assumptions on which much of misogynist discourse is founded. La Vieille's reading of Horace sheds light on the limitations of Raison's university model of reading, which does not account for the gender dynamics at work in lived experience. La Vieille's speech introduces a more sordid physical perspective on human existence, one that is indeed less pleasant but not less valid than Raison's. Her focus on the origin of marriage laws as a response to male aggression provides a counter-argument to Ami's portrait of le Jaloux. What she reveals about male sexuality paves the way for a different way of viewing the speeches of Nature and Genius, in which Genius takes over and corrupts Nature's voice. Within her discourse the reader can also catch glimpses of Jean de Meun's own world, thirteenth-century Paris. Before beginning an in-depth analysis in Chapter 4 of how la Vieille's speech problematizes many of the unacknowledged assumptions subtending the arguments of the other speakers, I now turn to the

social world of thirteenth-century France, a context which opens up new possibilities for reading la Vieille's speech.

¹ The best example of this can be seen in the speeches of Ami and la Vieille, which practically mirror each other on the structural level. In these two speeches the Golden Age myth acts as a frame for the centrally located themes: in Ami's speech this theme is male dominance in marriage as exemplified in the portrait of le Jaloux; in la Vieille's speech it is her discussion of women's freedom.

² One of the most detailed accounts of the Golden Age myth can be found in Book I of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

³ See John Marenbon's useful presentation of the different steps of a student's career at Paris and Oxford from about the mid-thirteenth century until the end of the middle ages. *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150-1350): An Introduction*. (London: Routledge, 1987) 21-22.

⁴ Raion's use of the word *coilles* and Amant's reaction to it have been the subject of much scholarly discussion. That Raion's use of this term involves a choice of words can be demonstrated by studying another commentary on the Golden Age myth that dates from roughly the same period, the *Ovide moralisé*. The anonymous author uses the term *genitaires* to refer to the testicles, a much less crude synonym for *coilles* and one which places emphasis on the generative function of this organ. It is no surprise, then, that Amant takes offense at her use of this term.

⁵ For the story of Hecuba, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses XIII*; for Sisicambris, see Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander II*.

⁶ All translations of the lines cited from the *Rose* are my own.

⁷ I refer here specifically to such Patristic writings as Tertullian's "On the Veiling of Virgins" and "On the Apparel of Women" and anti-marriage literature such as Saint Jérôme's *Adversus Jovinianum*, Juvenal's *Satires* and John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*.

⁸ If we consider the different castration narratives elaborated in the *Rose* (Saturn, Origen, Abelard), it appears that castration is most often carried out by men. Jupiter's castration of his father illustrates a father-son conflict in which the son seeks to overpower the father, Origen's castration was self-inflicted and done in order to avoid public scandal, and Abelard's castration was an act of vengeance inflicted upon him by the men of his wife's family. There is, however, at least one known case of a woman castrating a man. See Giles Constable, "Aelred of Rievaulx and the Nun of Watton," *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978) 206.

<p><u>Raison's Speech</u> 4199-4806 Love --good and bad 4807-5340 Fortune 5341-5428 Love v. Hate 5429-5504 Love v. Justice 5505-5524 Golden Age 5525-5666 Love v. Justice 5667-5764 Love v. Hate 5765-6870 Fortune 6871-7200 Amant rejects Raison.</p>	<p><u>Ami's Speech</u> 7201-7764 Strategies to adopt to gain access to the rose. 7765-7788 Amant objects, Ami justifies hypocrisy. 7855-8166 Wealth and Poverty 8167-8226 Avoid poverty by giving small, reasonable gifts. 8227-8324 How to keep a woman 8325-8424 Golden Age, in former times love was free. 8425-8436 Dominance and love do not mix. 8437-9390 Le Jaloux 9391-9462 Dominance and love do not mix. 9463-9648 Golden Age, origins of poverty and earthly rulers 9649-9969 How to keep a woman: give her freedom and hide other love affairs well.</p>
<p><u>La Vieille's Speech</u> 12709-12946 La Vieille's past 12947-12970 Amant's interjection 12971-13810 The games of love 13811-13844 Story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars (caught in the net) 13845-13905 Golden Age, origin of marriage laws 13906-14056 Women's freedom 14057-14126 Golden Age, marriage laws cannot suppress natural desires 14127-14156 Story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars (Once caught, lovers no longer hid their lovemaking.) 14157-14426 The games of love 14427-14516 La Vieille's past</p>	
<p><u>Nature's Speech</u> 15861-15983 Nature in her forge 16219-16241 Complaint against man 16242-16676 Genius intervenes, misogynous discourse 16677-16770 Nature's place & function 16771-16924 Sublunar world 16925-17027 Reason v. natural tendencies 17028-17475 Predestination & Necessity v. Free Will 17476-17844 Reason v. natural tendencies 17845-18936 Illusions, false beliefs, mirrors & optics 18061-18122 Genius on deceptive nature of women 18991-19408 Complaint against man (evokes Golden Age, 19133--19146) 19409-19414 Nature in her forge</p>	<p><u>Genius's Speech</u> 19475--19876 Nature's place & function 19877--20637 Le Parc du champ joli 20000--20180--Golden Age 20181-20637-- Le Parc du champ joli</p>

Table 1: The imbricated structure of the speeches of Raison, Ami, la Vieille, Nature and Genius

Chapter 3: Text and Context: Women's Lives in Thirteenth-Century France

1. Introduction

In recent years, much scholarly attention has been given to the topic of misogyny in medieval literature. At the same time, historians have taken a new interest in women's lives in medieval Europe. Although direct information about women's lives during this period is scarce, careful study of letters, charters, deeds, tax records, manuscripts and their illustrations, court cases, and other legal documents has shed much light on the diversity of women's lives throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. And yet, in spite of growth in both areas of research -- misogynous discourse and women's lives in medieval Europe -- little effort has been made to articulate the relationship between misogyny in literature and the lives of real women. In this chapter, I seek to establish an historical context within which readers can situate la Vieille's speech. My view is that Jean de Meun carefully altered his sources in ways that give insight into the historical conditions under which he worked, and that a close study of la Vieille's speech from this perspective will shed light on new possibilities for reading this text.

I wish to make it clear from the outset that I do not seek to argue that the author of the *Rose* portrayed a faithful image of the social reality of his day. On the contrary, from la Vieille herself to le Jaloux, the figures and characters that appear in the *Rose* are all types whose ancestors can be readily identified in the Latin literary tradition. While they are not modeled after people

from the social world of the thirteenth century, they evoke this world in ways that distinctly transform the meaning of the texts from which they are drawn. I touch upon this phenomenon in Chapter 4, where I argue that the description of the le Jaloux beating his wife (9331-9352) connects with la Vieille's advice on how a woman can deal with the problem of having her hair torn out by a jealous man. One of the points I wish to make clear is that while the issue of violence against women is evoked on many occasions in the sources that inform the *Rose*, the changes that the sources undergo can reveal the way particular issues were perceived by the contemporary society.¹ Indeed, the identifiable differences between the text of the *Rose* and its sources are inadequately understood if they are seen merely to be superficial changes, intended only to make the text more suitable to a contemporary reading public. I claim that these differences reveal much about the internal contradictions within the established values of Jean de Meun's time.

In order to move beyond an ironic reading of la Vieille's speech, it is necessary to turn to the historical context within which the *Rose* was written. I first look at women's relationship to the world of the university as it took shape in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It is important to establish this context since la Vieille is a reader of authoritative texts in Latin (Horace, Ovid, Boethius), indeed, the very texts that figure prominently in the university curricula. Next, I look at prostitution in the thirteenth century with a view to bring to light the ways in which this profession was sanctioned by secular and ecclesiastic authorities in medieval cities, while those same authorities publicly scorned individual prostitutes, in much the same way that Amant reviles la Vieille as "*la pute vieille redoutee*" (12540), while at the same time desperately

seeking her assistance in seducing the rose. While it is difficult to say at what age a woman was considered to be “old” in the thirteenth century, it is clear within the context of the *Rose* that an “old woman” is one who is no longer sexually desirable. I then discuss marriage in thirteenth-century France with a particular focus on inheritance laws and the role a wife was expected to play in a household. This is intended to provide readers with a background for interpreting la Vieille’s claim that she never married (and regrets it for economic reasons, 14503-14507) and her criticism of marriage laws written to maintain peace among warring males (13875-13886). Finally, I explore the problematic status of old women in the thirteenth-century. Their disempowered position in society stemmed largely from the visible effects of time on their bodies.²

Two problems became clear to me while doing research for this chapter. First, that it is almost meaningless to study the condition of women without at the same time taking into account the lives of men. Moreover, it is also necessary to keep in mind that if we allow ourselves to consider women and men as separate groups, we must also account for the distinctions among all people in terms of class. Second, that the “areas” of thirteenth-century French life delineated for this study, i.e., the university, marriage, prostitution, and old women are not discrete worlds that can be understood in isolation from one another. Indeed, as we shall see, these areas overlapped and intertwined in surprising ways.

2. The Thirteenth-Century University

In an article entitled “Sharing Wine, Women and Song: Masculine Identity Formation in the Medieval Universities” (1997), Ruth Mazo Karras proposes a unique approach to the discussion of this institution by taking the view that university members were “men,” and not just neutral “thinkers.” She goes beyond the more superficial questions of how the universities came about and what their achievements were to suggest that an obscure, yet profound, process of social transformation had been put in place by what was missing from this institution, namely women. Indeed, the University of Paris, like most other European universities of the Middle Ages, functioned according to a principle of exclusion. Not only were women excluded from the new university, but any man who was deemed to lack reason, was enslaved, had committed murder, was born illegitimate, or was missing a part of the body would also be barred from university study. Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa theologica* clearly stipulates these categories of exclusion. The university not only honed its students’ ability to interpret texts in Latin, but also, by the very structure of the students’ experiences, taught them to identify themselves as members of an elite group.

The social transformation I mention above would not have been so profound if the members of this elite group had been destined to remain within the institution. Several authors (Baldwin 1982; Cobban 1992; Karras 1997) concur that most students who obtained the degree of Master of Arts did not pursue higher degrees and even fewer went on to build a career in the Church. Those who held a degree of Master of Arts from the University of Paris were solicited by

institutions outside of the Church. Baldwin explains this as a response to a need for highly trained writers by an increasingly sophisticated society (1982, 157-58). Whereas in earlier centuries the basic services of reading and writing had been performed by literate laymen and ordinary clerics, the universities were producing graduates who had been trained to think and to write better through the intense study of logic, grammar and rhetoric. What made them more attractive to royal courts and government institutions was their ability to think rationally and systematically, to organize material, discard the irrelevant, and construct an argument to suit the purpose of the moment. It becomes clear that university graduates were involved in all areas that affect the way a society evolves, i.e., the Church, the court, government administration and legislation.

Thus the crucial role played by the French monarchy in the establishment of the University of Paris in the late twelfth century is directly related to the advantages that this institution could provide. King Philippe-Auguste designated a large piece of land on the left bank and had a wall built there at his own expense. The wall provided security to the area, thus allowing the learning process to flourish. He also repaved many of the central streets and built a covered market. The King wanted Paris to be a major center of administrative activity and intellectual life. By favoring the growth of the University of Paris, he could assure himself of an abundant supply of individuals who could contribute to what Baldwin calls “the furtherance of literacy,” that is, the increasingly skillful use of language to legitimize the precarious power of the monarchy (1982,158). As the university developed, so did its role in society become clearer and more practical. It functioned to train individuals to assume positions of responsibility within the

society: the secular professions of law, teaching, medicine, governmental or ecclesiastical employment (Cobban 228). Within such a system, those who are members of the elite group of university degree holders are placed in a position to make decisions that affect all those who are excluded from this group, that is, all women and most men.

In addition to their formal education, students came to the university to learn how to act out a very specific social role, i.e., to behave like an elite. It appears that very few students came from among the upper classes of society, but rather, originated from the middle class that was emerging. Often, a student's family would have saved up just enough money to send a son to the university, but once he arrived there funds were limited. Nonetheless, freshman students were expected to provide a feast for their upperclass comrades, thus demonstrating that they were willing to spend on themselves and on others, a sign of the generosity valued among the aristocracy (Karras 1997, 189).

In this environment, women were absent. Through the formal and informal training the male students received, they learned to perceive women as other or not at all. It was typical of students to spend much of their time in taverns, playing craps and gambling. They were also notorious for frequenting prostitutes whom they met in or near the taverns. Karras speculates that through their shared experience the influence of formal training in the lecture halls and their experience in the taverns, these men would bond as members of an elite group (1997, 187-89).

In an article entitled “Some Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Lectures on Female Sexuality” (1978), Helen Rodnite Lemay points out that while women were excluded from the university as individuals, as a group they nonetheless constituted a topic of study for the students. She analyzes the *De secretis mulierum*, composed during the thirteenth century by a disciple of Albertus Magnus, and the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century commentaries on it. She identifies a shift in attitude towards the female body by comparing these works to medical literature that was considered authoritative in previous centuries. In earlier treatises, by such authors as Caelus Aurelianus (known from a thirteenth-century manuscript), Cleopatra (second century), Theodorus Priscianus (late fourth century), Mustio (sixth century) and Trotula of Salerno (eleventh century), there is evidence that the authors felt some sympathy for women, whose bodies, in their view, made them vulnerable to illness and in need of medical aid (392). By contrast, the *De secretis mulierum* and the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century commentaries on it express a harsher and more judgmental position on the alleged inferiority of women. These writings reveal a deep fear and mistrust of women, who are considered harmful because of their biological make-up and also deliberately evil (Lemay 395). It is in these centuries that the association between female biology and evil works becomes more apparent than ever. Lemay observes that the problem of retention of the menses, for example, is viewed by the author of the treatise as not dangerous for the woman who suffers from it but for those who come in contact with her (394). One example is that of an old woman who no longer menstruates. If she were to look at a baby lying in a cradle, the child could become ill. It is her biological make-up that is at the origin of the evil. The author of the treatise claims that such women who no longer menstruate are deficient in natural heat and are filled with evil humors which move from the eye to the surrounding air (394). Thus, a post-menopausal woman’s look can be poisonous to

anyone but children are most vulnerable. Even more dangerous is an elderly poor woman who, because of the coarse nature of the food she eats, is even more poisonous (394). This thirteenth-century author also describes how women intentionally inflict wounds on the penis by placing chemical agents in the vagina prior to intercourse. The creation of such a wound supposedly allows the woman's menses to enter the male by way of the penis (395). Lemay suggests that the treatise and its commentaries give authoritative, scientific status to arguments that construct women as not only inferior but also intentionally evil. In her conclusion, she suggests that this shift in the scholastic literature on women prepared the way for the formal persecution of women as witches in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (399).

Lemay's discussion of university texts on women reinforces Karras's view that university students bonded with one another and identified themselves as members of an elite group. If they saw themselves as distinct from women based on their physical, intellectual, and moral superiority, they also set themselves apart from men who were not members of the university by speaking to one another in Latin. This set them apart from all other members of society who lacked university training.

There was little control of students by the university or municipal authorities. Students typically spent much of their time in taverns. Not only did they gamble but they would also become unruly from heavy drinking. This would lead to violent brawls among students or gang rape of women who became their targets. Jacques Rossiaud, who analyzes 125 cases of reported rape in Dijon between 1436 and 1487, claims that in the Middle Ages, individual women were placed in

one of two categories: the pure and the public (21). Gang rape was a problem for the municipal authorities because sometimes “pure women” would become its victims (23). The perpetrators of such crimes would come from all social classes and professions, and the university students were known to participate in such attacks (13, n. 5). However, as early as the thirteenth century, all students had the status of clerics while attending university, which meant they benefitted from the clerical privileges accorded to them by Philippe-Auguste in 1200. After a tavern brawl got out of control and two students were killed by the police, the king declared that students could not be physically harmed and, as clerics, were subject only to the jurisdiction of the Church. This move was in his own interest because he was afraid the students and masters might leave the city in protest (Baldwin 1982, 142; Baldwin 1970, 145; Rossiaud, 41).

By virtue of their clerical status, students who were known to have participated in gang rapes were not subject to punishment by the municipal authorities. Moreover, women who had been raped were hesitant to bring charges because the publicity surrounding such a suit would cause irreparable damage to the victim’s reputation. As a known rape victim, she would be considered ineligible for marriage and would be forced to lead a life of prostitution or vagabondage. A woman could become the target of a group of men simply because she aroused their suspicion or desire. In other cases, women were targeted because they were priests’ concubines. Widows, women separated from their husbands or whose husbands were absent were also vulnerable to rape, along with servants and poor girls (Rossiaud: 28-29). Rossiaud claims that this type of rape formed part of a ritual of learning how to be masculine and also functioned as a defiance of the social order embodied in marriage (22).

It was the rape of “pure” women that most concerned the municipal authorities, and so prostitution was not only tolerated but also institutionalized by the establishment of municipal brothels. Given the university students’ propensity for taverns, gambling and prostitutes, it is not surprising to learn that many brothels were established in or near the student quarter.

3. Prostitution in Thirteenth-Century France

There are many ways to approach the topic of medieval prostitution and many questions to ask. One important question for scholars in recent years is whether we should view prostitutes as victims or as agents making their own choices. The question is hard to answer without first defining what is meant by the term ‘prostitute’. Ruth Mazo Karras, in *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford University Press, 1996) claims that none of the medieval documents on prostitution contain an equivalent of what today we call a prostitute. Words such as *meretrix* and *putain* were applied to many different women, not just to those who accepted money in exchange for sexual services. Women who were not professional prostitutes could be labelled ‘whores’ simply if they had a bad reputation. Indeed, “whore” was a category of women, not a set of specific behaviors (Karras 1996:20). Moreover, prostitution took many forms, both formal and informal, and evolved over the course of the Middle Ages.

In this discussion I limit myself to prostitution in thirteenth-century France with an emphasis on Paris. Although there are almost no studies that are so limited in scope, I have benefitted from

the works of scholars such as Ruth Mazo Karras, Jacques Rossiaud and John W. Baldwin who, in the context of broader studies of France or England in the Middle Ages, have made important contributions to the discussion of prostitution in thirteenth-century Paris. Any thorough discussion of the University of Paris must also acknowledge the presence of prostitutes in the student quarter and their relation to university life. Moreover, the work of Sharon Farmer on working women in Paris in the thirteenth century (1998) also gives much insight into the question of how women became prostitutes. Likewise, the work of John Riddle (1996) on abortifacients and birth control necessarily includes prostitution. Indeed, it is difficult to understand prostitution in thirteenth-century Paris without taking into account the changes brought about by the new university and a demographic shift towards the urban area.

In a study focused on the lives of women whose stories are told by Guillaume de Saint-Pathus in the *Miracles of Saint Louis*, Sharon Farmer describes the situation of women immigrants to Paris in an article entitled “Down and Out and Female in Thirteenth-Century Paris” (1998). Through the references to actual individuals in the *Miracles*, Farmer uses this text along with other sources to describe the picture of them that emerges from them of working and non-working poor women, the difficult circumstances they endured and the friendships and social networks that allowed them to survive. Farmer’s analyses focus primarily on women who have immigrated to Paris from other regions during a time when the population of Paris grew from approximately 160,000 to 210,000 between 1240 and 1328 (352). Farmer does not indicate what caused people to immigrate to Paris but claims that the records make it clear that immigration was the major factor in this growth. Of the women whose stories are told in the *Miracles*, more

than half were immigrants. Among these immigrants, many were single women who had come to Paris alone and without the safety net of families. These women were particularly vulnerable in the cities because they were paid much lower wages than men, and many, such as laundresses whose trade was not part of the guild system, had to supplement their income through prostitution (355). Without the protection of male relatives or a husband, they were at greater risk of falling victim to gang rape, a crime that frequently went unpunished. Single women who took positions as servants might also be subjected to rape and abuse by their male masters.

Farmer's description of the situation of poor women in Paris is important to an understanding of how women came to be prostitutes. As I mentioned earlier, Karras has brought up the question of whether we should view prostitutes as victims or as free agents making their own choices. In my view, it is necessary to take into account the different forms that prostitution took over the course of the Middle Ages. For the thirteenth century, at least, the evidence indicates that women became prostitutes because there was no other choice available. They were victims of either poverty, coercion or trickery.

A woman's entry into a life of prostitution very often began with her rape. Once a woman lost her virginity through rape, and she became known as a victim, she was then considered to bear some of the guilt, especially if she was attractive. In the thirteenth century, many municipal authorities set up public brothels in order to protect 'pure' women from falling victim to gang rapes. Prostitution was considered a necessary evil because it functioned as a safety valve for the dangers of male sexuality (Karras 1996b, 244-246). In some cases, the municipal authorities

sollicited women to work in the public brothels by promising them freedom from poverty. Other methods for recruiting women into the public brothels were more sinister, often involving kidnapping or deception. A woman would be promised a job as a servant in a good household, and then taken to the brothel and gang raped. She might be coerced to stay there on the threat of violence, or because she was now ineligible for marriage. In other cases, women were simply kidnapped and taken to the brothel to be gang raped (Karras 1996a, 57-64). Still others became prostitutes because they were known to be victims of gang rapes in the city. This is one of the reasons women withdrew complaints against rapists or refused to file them in the first place (Rossiaud 27-29, n. 5).

Prostitution took other forms than the public brothel. These include street walkers who worked for themselves or women who worked for a procuress operating a prostitution business out of her home. These prostitutes did not necessarily live with the procuress, but would come to work for her at certain times. Still other situations existed in which young women were solicited into phony apprenticeships and were forced to work in a clandestine brothel behind a storefront. Stew houses, or public baths, were also known as quasi-brothels because very often prostitution took place there in spite of laws that forbade this.

Once a woman became a prostitute in a public brothel, it was very difficult for her to leave. The brothel keepers would charge high rates for room and board. Women would run up high debts to the brothel keeper and would subsequently be forced to put in many years of service in order to repay them. Moreover, in many cities, known prostitutes were forced to wear ray hoods

whenever they went out of the brothel and were restricted to certain streets. Yarn production was a major occupation for women, and prostitutes in Southwark, England were not allowed to spin or card wool. Karras claims that this law could be interpreted either as an attempt to limit the work options of prostitutes, or to protect the prostitutes from other forms of exploitation (1996a:39).

Further evidence that prostitutes in the thirteenth century should be viewed as victims rather than free agents comes from the accounts of prostitutes being beaten to induce a miscarriage.

Although prostitutes were aware of and used many contraceptives and abortifacients, pregnancies would still occur. However, it might happen that brothel keepers and procuresses would arrange to have a pregnant prostitute beaten until a miscarriage was induced. According to Rossiaud (125-126), this was not considered to be a crime if carried out during the first seventy days of the pregnancy, or before the “quickening” of the fetus. This refers to the distinction made between a “formed” and “unformed” fetus, the latter being considered by the Church to not yet possess a soul.

Some prostitutes did carry pregnancies to term in spite of the availability of abortifacients and the practice of forced miscarriages. However, there are no records available to account for these children. Rossiaud (126) makes a provocative inference when he claims that scholars have neglected to study the coincidental establishment of institutionalized prostitution and the founding of hospitals and hospices specializing in newborn infants. There is some speculation that they may have been abandoned, killed or left at a foundling hospital under the pretext that

the mother was of some other profession. It appears that the municipal authorities were aware of these children, although they publicly supported the official position of the Church that fornication with a prostitute was sterile.³

Karras speculates that the lack of information available on the children of prostitutes may indicate a high rate of non-procreative sex, contraception, abortion, infanticide or abandonment (1996a, 83). She also points out that it is unlikely that prostitutes obtained knowledge on contraception and abortion through medical texts, since most of them did not know how to read. Moreover, such information was generally suppressed from gynecological treatises intended for women (82). It seems more likely that information on contraceptive methods and abortifacients was passed along orally. This view is shared by John M. Riddle who in “Contraception and Early Abortion in the Middle Ages” (1996) claims that most women knew quite a bit about their use. He points out that the distinction between what was a contraceptive and what was an abortifacient was a fluid one. Riddle uses an example taken from a treatise on medicine and common ailments composed around 800 in the Benedictine Abbey at Lorsch (Germany). Riddle claims that knowledge of birth control and abortifacients was primarily a woman’s secret, but one recipe entitled “A Cure for All Kinds of Stomach Aches” is almost wholly made up of substances used in making abortifacients and antifertility drugs. The term “stomach ache” in this case is most likely a euphemism for pregnancy. Indeed, the text of the manuscript indicates that this recipe has at least one specific purpose: “For women who cannot purge themselves, it moves the menses” (262).⁴ Almost all of the ingredients of this “cure” are items that are commonly found in the kitchen, which gives us some idea of women’s easy access to such remedies.

Among these ingredients Riddle has found that pepper, ginger, parsley, celery seeds and spignel contain substances that are known to cause abortions in humans. Moreover, fennel, cumin and anise are known as antifertility plants. Opium poppy, on the other hand, may have functioned as an analgesic (Riddle 262).⁵ Riddle suggests that the knowledge of contraceptives and abortifacients was widespread throughout the Middle Ages, and that women generally possessed a more thorough knowledge of it than men. Karras suggests that prostitutes may have been associated with knowledge about reproductive matters (1996a, 82). We find only sparse evidence of it in medical treatises because the larger body of knowledge that women possessed was most likely transmitted orally from generation to generation.

Prostitution was legitimized as an institution over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in France. This is no historical accident, but rather, is an event closely linked to the evolution of the rules of celibacy for clerics, changes in inheritance laws and in the Church's requirements for a valid marriage. Karras has linked this to the fact that fewer men were eligible for marriage due to shifting inheritance practices, and young women had to compete for the available men based on the importance of their dowries (246). In this situation, the existence of daughters became a problem and the abundance of unmarried men left women vulnerable to rape and abuse. In order to better understand this phenomenon, we now turn to a discussion of marriage in thirteenth-century France.

4. Marriage in Thirteenth-Century France

There is no single model that adequately describes women's experience of marriage in thirteenth-century France. Women of the aristocracy had different expectations of their relationship with their spouse and of their general lifestyle than did women of the bourgeois, artisan or peasant classes. It is clear that women of the aristocracy, particularly those who had sizable dowries, married at a much younger age than their counterparts from lower ranks of society. Indeed, many young girls were betrothed at as early as seven years of age. Not only did women of lower ranks marry later, but they were more likely to have at least some say in the choice of their mate and to play a more important role within the family. The picture that emerges with respect to aristocratic brides is that they are brought into the household for what they bring to the family in terms of land and wealth, and as producers of male heirs. I do not mean to suggest that all aristocratic marriages were loveless, but it is accurate to state that in this context, a great deal of importance was placed on the wealth of a future wife. While the daughters of merchants, artisans and peasants also brought wealth through their dowries, and in some cases their inheritance, they also assumed much responsibility within the household as individuals. Through their skill in a trade or in farming techniques, artisan and peasant women contributed significantly to the family's productivity. This, in turn, gave them much more control over the everyday running of the household. As for women of the bourgeoisie, they were expected to manage the affairs of a large household, including much of the financial management.

The degree of responsibility given to a wife for the success of a household's productivity greatly affected the relationships between spouses. Although I generalize here in order to make the distinction between social classes clearer, it is fair to say that in general, the greater a woman's contribution to a household, the more she was seen by her spouse as a partner. Therefore, in the aristocratic milieu, in which a woman's role was limited to producing heirs, relatively little importance was placed on her worth as an individual.

One important difference between wives of wealthier classes and those of artisans and peasants can be seen in the way in which they brought up their children. In general, a wealthy mother would bring a wet-nurse into the household to breastfeed a baby, rather than nursing the infant herself. The reason why this was so widely practiced among the wealthy is unclear. Gies and Gies claim that the Church sought to encourage all women to breastfeed their own children because putting a child out to nurse with a wet nurse "was contrary to Scripture and medical science" (1987, 200). According to these authors, statues in churches and illustrations in manuscripts that portrayed Mary breastfeeding Jesus were an attempt to encourage all mothers to do the same. They also tried to persuade women to breastfeed their children through sermons and examples, but these apparently did not have an effect on the nobility. Peasant and artisan women, on the other hand, nursed their own babies unless something prevented them from doing so (200). It is natural to wonder what difference this made in the bond between mothers and children; however, such questions are beyond the scope of this discussion.

While a potential existed for wives to enjoy varying degrees of importance within a household, it is also true that married women of all classes were subject to specific rules of conduct that grew out of assumptions about the nature of women. These assumptions had been articulated within the learned context of the Church, which, during the twelfth century, had begun to assert its exclusive jurisdiction over marriage; and as it did so, it also hardened its view of women (L'Hermite-Leclercq, 247).⁶ Arguments in support of the alleged inferiority of the female sex had arisen long before the twelfth century. However, as the Church sought to control the institution of marriage, it founded many of its assertions of power on the need to control women. One of the first changes to come about in the twelfth century was the requirement of active consent by both parties to a marriage, which was clearly articulated in the *Decretum Gratiani* (c.1140). Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq argues that the principle of free consent was not adopted by the Church to defend a woman's rights *per se*, but rather, to ensure the stability of the conjugal cell on which the perpetuation of the species depended (222). Presumably, by allowing women to choose between marriage or celibacy, the Church would avoid the problem raised by betrothed women who wished to remain virgins and who brought their case to the ecclesiastical court. The Church allowed young women to give their consent as early as age twelve, at which age a girl was believed to be fully developed both physically and mentally. Indeed, in the eyes of the Church, the female body was fully mature at age twelve, whereas the female mind, though it was also fully developed, was weak (L'Hermite-Leclercq, 247). At that age, young girls were perceived to be at risk of losing their virginity through premarital sex, and it was considered best for them to marry as soon as possible. This way, they would be under the supervision and control of a husband, who would know how to tame their alleged excesses of sensuality. Married women were subjected to almost constant suspicion of adulterous liaisons. Both

customary and canon law encouraged husbands to beat their wives in order to maintain control of them.

L'Hermite-Leclercq (210-212) speculates that women as a group would have found male dominance in marriage to be ordinary. She claims that from a very early age, parents taught girls that their intellect and their nature were weaker than those of boys. In aristocratic families, girls were segregated from boys at an early age. They lived in the women's quarters, the gynaeceum, where they learned to do women's work. Aristocratic girls who were betrothed prior to the age of puberty left the family to live in the household of their future husband. Girls of the peasant and artisan classes married later than aristocratic girls, but they were often apprenticed out during adolescence. The difference between boys and girls was also illustrated by the stark difference in formal education practices. By the thirteenth century, schools only taught reading and writing in Latin to boys who were clerical trainees. While both noble and peasant boys were eligible to attend the cathedral schools, girls were not permitted by virtue of their exclusion from the clerical orders, though they could be educated in convents.⁷

Jacques Le Goff (1980, 356) speculates that the model of the "housewife" may have coincided with the rise of the bourgeoisie.⁸ In Le Goff's view, it is the bourgeois milieu that replaces the feudal one, and within this new order it is important to recognize the development of the urban bourgeoisie as one factor that influenced the social status of women in thirteenth-century France. It is equally important to define what is meant by the term "bourgeois" in the context of the thirteenth century. Le Goff (343) points out that the term generally designated a legal category

defined by the payment of a specific tax, permitting specific privileges such as the right to play a political role in the town. The term bourgeois was also defined by legal status in different courts.⁹ Within this bourgeois milieu, women were deprived of any political voice. While they participated actively in the economic life of the city, they were prevented from participating in the municipal council (*conseil municipal*) (Le Goff 356-357).

This is just one of the many factors that contributed to a change in women's status both within society and within marriage, specifically because these restrictions became more codified. We have already seen that the Church asserted its right to full jurisdiction over marriage, and after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 (Lateran IV), specific changes were imposed on marital practices in order to elevate marriage to the status of a sacrament and also to limit the chaos that resulted when women were used as pawns to gain and/or maintain control over property and wealth (L'Hermite-Leclercq, 202-241). Brides were now required to be endowed, weddings were to be public and held in a church, both parties to a marriage had to make a declaration of consent and publication of marriage banns was now required.

While these changes did not represent a radical shift in wedding practices, they were enough to ensure a stricter surveillance of marriages by the Church and a lower status for women within the marriage. This lower status had much to do with the way inheritance laws had evolved over the course of the twelfth century. While the practice of primogeniture varied significantly from region to region, it nonetheless had a significant impact on the status of women in general as well as within marriage. By the thirteenth century, the practice of handing down inherited property

from the father to the eldest son was in vigor in some areas. Although there was a wide variation in inheritance practices on the local level, in general sons were expected to inherit the family property while daughters were expected to leave the family with a dowry. The effect of primogeniture was more detrimental to the daughters and younger sons of the aristocracy since there was much more land and wealth at stake (Gies and Gies 143-44, 169). For one thing, the existence of a daughter, or several daughters, was now seen as a problem. Not only was it necessary to find suitable husbands for them, i.e., young men who stood to inherit some type of wealth, but they also had to be provided with a dowry. Primogeniture greatly reduced the number of eligible young men since now so many sons were deprived of an inheritance. As for the dowry system, it was now necessary for young women to compete for the men who were available. As a consequence, dowries increased and, in the case of families with several daughters, often only a few were selected by the father to receive a dowry. When there was an excess of daughters in the aristocratic family, many were sent to convents.

However, there were ways of getting around the restrictions imposed by primogeniture. A father could entail a part of his inherited land upon a younger son, who would receive it upon the father's death (Gies and Gies 190-91). Moreover, any property that had been conquered or purchased by a father could be disposed of as he wished. Another way for a woman to retain the control of her husband's estate after his death was through jointure. This refers to a pledge of joint tenancy by husband and wife during their lifetime, and by the survivor alone after the death of one spouse (Gies and Gies 188). In spite of the different ways to get around primogeniture, its

general effect on the aristocracy was to inflate dowries, lower the age of marriage for women, and reduce the number of eligible men (Gies and Gies 188-95).

Once a woman was married, whatever property or wealth she had brought to the marriage as her dowry was under the control of her husband. Upon the death of the husband, the widow was to receive one third of his inheritance as her dower, but this could be complicated if her dead husband's mother were still alive. In this case, she would receive one third of the two thirds that remained after her mother-in-law had claimed her own dower. A peasant widow might be able to acquire a greater portion of her husband's estate than the one third to one half fixed by common law.

Lateran IV had made active consent a requirement for a valid marriage. Nonetheless, women were not completely free to choose a marriage partner on their own because they risked disinheritance if their fathers did not approve of their choice of a husband. This would mean no dowry, and as we have seen, a dowry was essential to a woman's ability to marry. This situation forced some young women into lives as servants or prostitutes. L'Hermite-Leclercq (203) suggests that the supply of women was plentiful while the marriage opportunities were limited. I suggest that this contributed much to the general loss of status by women in thirteenth-century France. This position of disempowerment became particularly apparent when a woman reached old age.

5. Old Women

In a society structured to affirm a paradigm which places the woman in the role of passive object (beloved) of the male lover's desire, old age diminishes a woman's value. The aged female body is often the object of ridicule and scorn in the literature and academic writings of the Middle Ages, and the same can be said of many other eras and cultures, but my discussion here is limited to the literature and culture of 13th-century France.¹⁰ Shulamith Shahar, in an article entitled "The Old Body in Medieval Culture" (1994), emphasizes the association in medieval culture between the old female body and sin. This view of the female body also manifested itself in the lives of real women. In the urban centers of thirteenth-century France, old women were among the most vulnerable to falling into poverty. In this section I discuss some medieval views of the old female body and the consequences of these views on the lives of old women. I also look at some of the ways in which old women coped within a society that deemed them of little value, and note how these coping strategies defy the traditional misogynous beliefs about the nature of old women.

There is very little direct evidence about the lives of old women in thirteenth-century Paris. It is fitting to recall here that there are no personal accounts by women of their experiences. What evidence historians have obtained about the lives of old women comes from court documents, tax records, and texts by male clerics. Although this situation makes the task of describing women's lives in thirteenth-century France tricky, historians have proposed interesting interpretations of the available documentation.

I have already briefly addressed the attitude towards the old female body that is present in such scientific texts as the thirteenth-century *De secretis mulierum*. Here we see that the focal point of medieval fear of the old female body can be found in its status as a non-menstruating one.

Lack of menstruation allegedly made this body dangerous to those who would come in contact with it because it was capable of producing poison (Shahar 163). There is an irony in this fear of the old female body: when a woman is young, it is her reproductive capacity, both her menstrual flow and her youthful body, that makes her dangerous to men; when she is old, it is the loss of her reproductive capacity that also poses a danger through its potential to poison both men and women.

Associated with the dangers of the old female body is another threat, that of secret knowledge that old women possess and which they use to manipulate people. In an article entitled “Savoir médicale et anthropologie religieuse. Les représentations et les fonctions de la *vetula* (XIIIe-XVe siècle)” (1993), Jole Agrimi and Chiara Crisciani bring to light the extent to which the fear of the old woman, *la vetula*, was widespread within the European university milieu from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. In their analysis of numerous academic writings from this period, they identify a frequent argument according to which old women are dangerous because they possess knowledge about birth, death, and sexuality. Since they are not trained rationally to organize this knowledge, they are likely to use it to dubious ends. One concludes from Agrimi and Crisciani’s discussion that old women were viewed as receptacles of unorganized, indeed

chaotic, knowledge.¹¹ Therefore, it was imperative to usurp this knowledge from them in order to subject it to rational organization, of which only university-trained clerics were capable.

Old women were suspected of concocting philtres of love or death (Shahar 163). Those most vulnerable to public suspicion were poor women, who were considered to be the most venomous to others because, as already mentioned above, their food was coarser. These beliefs explain the scorn and ridicule of old women characters such as la Vieille in medieval literature. Though it is difficult to find documentation of how these beliefs affected real women, what we do know about thirteenth-century Paris is that poor women shared solidarity and genuine acts of kindness.

In an article entitled “Down and Out and Female in Thirteenth-Century Paris” (1998), Sharon Farmer uses *Les Miracles de St. Louis* by Guillaume de St.-Pathus to identify stories of solidarity among Paris’s urban poor in the thirteenth century. In Farmer’s view, there was no apparent economic benefit to be gained from the aid that the urban poor extended to one another. Many of her stories turn around women who were apparent victims of strokes. One such story is that of Nicole de Rubercy, a forty-two-year-old laundress who fell victim to paralysis (Farmer 345). She was taken in and cared for by her friend, a widow named Contesse, who fed her, dressed her, took her to the public baths, and made two trips with her to the tomb of St. Louis (Farmer 345). Not only did this require much of Contesse’s time, but also required her to incur some expenses. She received some financial help from another woman, Perronnele the Smith (Farmer 346). Farmer’s descriptions of clear cases of female solidarity go against the misogynous clerical view of poor old women as venomous and harmful to others. She also

makes it clear that historians of poverty have tended to see the poor in relation to the wealthy elites who gave them charity, while ignoring the network of mutual aid among the poor themselves (347). Indeed, one of the factors in the survival of the urban poor was the mutual help they extended to one another.

Women were vulnerable to poverty in this urban environment because they were paid lower wages than men. Poor women might supplement their income through prostitution (Farmer 354-55). However, women rarely worked as prostitutes into old age. Since there was an abundant supply of young prostitutes, when a woman could no longer work because of her age, she would often go into the business of procuring women for prostitution. As Karras points out, the old woman, or bawd, was particularly despised in medieval society. Court records indicate that female procuresses were treated more harshly than prostitutes and their male clients (1996b, 252).

It is difficult to recover a clear picture of what life was like for old women in thirteenth-century Paris. The evidence does indicate, however, that they were among the most vulnerable to poverty, especially those who were unmarried or widowed. Nonetheless, countering the elite clerical authors' harsh treatment of them in their writings, there are examples of old women who, in their daily lives, appear to have acted according to the Christian principles of friendship and charity.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to establish a context for reading la Vieille's speech in view of the social condition of women in thirteenth-century France. I have limited my discussion to four aspects of thirteenth-century urban life: the university, prostitution, marriage, and old women. I have attempted here to show the ways in which these areas overlap. Commerce with prostitutes was as much a part of a university student's life as were lectures and study. At the same time, university students were officially clerics, a status which ostensibly did not permit them to engage in sexual relations. And yet, there is much evidence that contact with prostitutes was frequent among the students, and there is also evidence of their participation in gang rapes. At the same time, it was within this university milieu that arguments in favor of Church control of marriage and male dominance in marriage were articulated. By the thirteenth century, marriage had long been forbidden to clerics. The obvious irony here is that the class of men not allowed to experience any intimate contact with women other than transient relationships with prostitutes was the same one which defined the rules of marriage. Ruth Mazo Karras's article on the formation of masculine identity in medieval universities (1997) brings to light the extent to which male-authored medieval texts present the male authorship as an unexamined assumption. Moreover, we know that the university quarter housed an abundant population of prostitutes and that their services were in demand by the university community. Finally, old women held the knowledge about women's medicine the university clerics wished to appropriate and contact with them was necessary to the redaction of university medical texts. However, in order to

establish their own scientific authority, university writers also developed a discourse about old women that constructed them as possessors of medical knowledge who lacked the intellectual ability to use it properly. Thus old women became part of the university doctors' medical text and were thus effectively sidelined by the very discourse to which they had contributed knowledge.

While it is right to recognize the great intellectual achievements of the authors who trained in such institutions as the University of Paris, if our interpretation of their work is to be balanced, we must also recognize their more human dimension. They were also males, living within the confines of particular historic circumstances. Although we cannot capture those circumstances in detail, the recent increase in material available on women's lives gives much insight into the lives of women and men. It is from this perspective that I propose a close reading of la Vieille's speech in Jean de Meun's portion of *Le Roman de la rose*.

¹ In chapter 4 I discuss the connection between Ovid's *Loves I*, vii-viii and the problems of violence described in la Vieille's speech.

² For a discussion of medieval universities useful to feminist criticism, see Ruth Mazo Karras, "Sharing Wine, Women and Song: Masculine Identity Formation in the Medieval European Universities." in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*. eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1997), 187-202; John W. Baldwin's discussion of the rise of the University of Paris makes clear the important role played by the monarchy in this process. See "Masters at Paris from 1179 to 1215: A Social Perspective." in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*. eds. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 138-172. The role of the university is described by Alan Cobban in "Reflections on the Role of Medieval Universities in Contemporary Society." in *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages, Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson*. (London: Hambledon Press, 1992) 227-242. Cobban's article contains many useful references for further study of medieval universities. For an informative discussion of medieval prostitution, see Jacques Rossiaud. *Medieval Prostitution*. trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988). Rossiaud's book provides useful information on prostitution in thirteenth-century France. Ruth Mazo Karras's book, *Common Women, Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 1996), lays out the problems involved in thinking about prostitution. She asks the important question of whether or not medieval prostitutes saw themselves as victims or as free agents. Although her study centers on post-plague prostitution in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England, she often draws useful comparisons with prostitution on the Continent. See also Karras's article, "Prostitution in Medieval Europe." in *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996) 243-260. Sharon Farmer's article, "Down and Out and Female in Thirteenth-Century Paris." *American Historical Review* 103, 2 (April, 1998) 345-372, gives much insight into the lives of poor, urban women in thirteenth-century Paris and the connection between poverty and prostitution. Finally, John Baldwin's discussion of prostitution in the student quarter in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Paris is also useful. See, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*, pp. 133-136. For useful discussions of marriage in thirteenth-century France, see Frances and Joseph Gies. *Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1987). See also, Jacques Le Goff. "L'apogée de la France urbaine médiévale, 1150-1330" in *Histoire de la France urbaine, tome 2, la ville médiévale: des Carolingiens à la Renaissance*. eds. André Chédeville, Jacques Le Goff and Jacques Rossiaud. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980) 183-405; and Georges Duby, "The Courtly Model." trans. Arthur Goldhammer. in *A History of Women in the West: Silences of the Middle Ages*. eds. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992) 250-266. In this same volume see Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq. "The Feudal Order." trans. Arthur Goldhammer. 202-249. For insight into the real lives of old women, see Farmer, "Down and Out and Female..." For beliefs about old women, see Shulamith Shahar. "The Old Body in Medieval Culture." in *Framing Medieval Bodies*. ed. Sarah Kay (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994) and Jole Agrimi and Chiara Crisciani. "Savoir médicale et anthropologie religieuse: Les représentations et les fonctions de la *vetula* (XIIIe-XVe siècle)" *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 48, 5 (sept.-oct. 1993) 1281-1308.

³ For further discussion of the medieval view that prostitutes were sterile, see Joan Cadden. *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages -- Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 92-96; Rossiaud 124-126; Karras (1996a) 82-83.

⁴ The ingredients are as follows: 8 oz. white pepper, 8 oz. ginger (*Zingiber officinale* L.), 6 oz. parsley (*Petroselinum sativum* Nym.), 2 oz. celery seeds (*Apium graveolens* L.), 6 oz. caraway? (*caregium*=? *Carum carvi* L.), 6 oz. spignel seeds (*libesticum*=? *Peucedanum cervaria* L.), 2 oz. fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare* Mill.), 2 oz. geranium/ or, giant fennel (*amonum*=? *Geranium* sp./ or, *Ferula tingitana* L.), 8 oz. cumin

6 oz. anise (*Pimpinella anisum*), 6 oz. opium poppy (*miconum*= *papaver somniferum* L.), 1 oz. = approx. 30 gr. (from Bamberg Ms. med. 1, published by Ulrich Stoll, *Das 'Lorscher Arzneibuch'*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1992), 116, cited in Riddle, 1996, 262 and n.1, 274)

⁵ The problem of whether or not these recipes functioned as a contraceptives or abortifacients stems from the difference between our twentieth-century notion of conception and the one that dominated throughout the Middle Ages. According to Riddle, medieval people understood that there was a period of time between the sexual act and the establishment of a pregnancy. However, while today we consider the beginning of human life to be the moment conception occurs, in the Middle Ages a fetus was not considered to possess a soul until it began to look like a human being (265). This means that a woman whose period was late would likely associate the delay with the presence of sperm in her body and therefore would take what was called a menstrual stimulator, a concoction similar to, or perhaps stronger, than the one described in the Lorscher manuscript. This would presumably bring on the flow of her menstrual cycle by either making her uterus unreceptive to the implantation of an embryo, or by dislodging one that has already implanted itself. Riddle

points out that today we would consider the former to be contraception and the latter case abortion. In the Middle Ages, there was no such distinction.

⁶ Douglas Kibbee has pointed out that starting in the 12th century in France, the Church's control over marriage was revisited by the secular bureaucracy and has advised me to explore the writings of Paul Ourliac on this topic (*Etudes de droit et d'histoire*, 1980). I wish to thank Professor Kibbee for bringing this reference to my attention and intend to make use of this when I rework this thesis for future publication.

⁷ Gies and Gies (1987) claim that boys were taught Latin grammar, Latin classics and philosophy in these schools. Boys who performed poorly were beaten.

⁸ See Jacques LeGoff, "Les femmes dans la ville" in *Histoire de la France urbaine, t. 2, La Ville médiévale des Carolingiens à la Renaissance*. André Chédeville, Jacques LeGoff and Jacques Rossiaud, eds. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980, 356. "La femme bourgeoise est écartée du conseil municipal alors qu'elle ne l'est pas toujours du conseil féodal et qu'elle gouverne des maisons religieuses. On peut se demander si le modèle de "la femme au foyer" ne s'élabore pas dans le milieu bourgeois médiéval."

⁹ I wish to thank Professor Douglas Kibbee for this information.

¹⁰ In *Le roman de la rose* see the description of Vieillesse in Guillaume's portion (ll.) and Amant's remarks on la Vieille in Jean de Meun's portion (ll.).

¹¹ This image of the old woman as receptacle of unorganized knowledge parallels the image of the younger woman as receptacle of male seed. In both cases, the organizing principle is male.

Chapter 4: A Close Reading of la Vieille's Speech

1. Introduction

In Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Rose*, la Vieille's speech is placed in a central position and, within this speech, the theme of women's freedom is at the core. If nothing else, this structure of frames within frames should draw our attention to something intentional on the part of the author. Without an awareness of this imbricated structure, it is easy to see why a humorous, ironic reading of la Vieille's speech would make sense. A rambling, seemingly unorganized discourse fits well with the misogynist notion of a weak female intellect. Why wouldn't a medieval clerk steeped in misogynist culture take the side of those who found the idea of an old woman and former procuress lecturing in the fashion of university professors humorous at best? I say that Jean did this, and he did just the opposite, for many careful, scholarly readings of this text have often led to interpretations that are diametrically opposed. In this chapter I argue that Jean de Meun's views of women and their relationship to the larger society were nuanced, and it is the complexity of la Vieille's speech that invites a reader to hear more than irony. La Vieille is a reader of more than one university text, and as we shall see, we may find in her readings insights that give legitimacy to her complaints against the entrapment of women within patriarchy.

A close reading of la Vieille's speech reveals a highly organized imbricated structure. By approaching this speech from the angle of the frames that structure it, readers will have a crucial key for interpreting *Le Roman de la rose*. When read linearly by a silent reader of the twentieth century, this text presents a number of difficulties. The lengthy and abundant digressions that characterize the speeches in Jean de Meun's continuation baffle new students of the *Rose* and have even frustrated eminent medievalists.¹ One way to make sense of what at first appears to be a discussion whose themes change in a chaotic manner is to recognize that the sequence in which these themes appear, disappear and then reappear constitutes a series of frames.²

The themes which give structure to la Vieille's speech appear and reappear (see Table as follows: 1) her past (12709-12946; 14157-14426); 2) the games of love (12971-13810; 14157-14426); 3) Vulcan, Venus and Mars (13811-13844; 14127-14156); 4) the Golden Age (13845-13905; 14057-14126); 5) the problem of women's freedom (13906-14056), the theme that sits in the center of all the other frames.³

The story of her past constitutes the external frame of la Vieille's speech (12709-12946 and 14157-14426). This portion lays bare the crucial link between human temporality and a patriarchal love paradigm which locates the female beloved within temporality and the male lover outside of it. Inherent in this love paradigm is a power structure that makes a woman's value contingent on the male gaze, which results in a loss of her value over time as she ages and her beauty fades. Set within this frame is la Vieille's advice on the games of love (12971-13810 and 14157-14426). Her aim here is to reveal a method by which women can rebel against the

unfairness of such a love paradigm. This advice takes the form of an art of prostitution which draws from many of the texts that were part of the curriculum at the University of Paris, most notably, Ovid's *Amores*, *The Heroïdes*, *The Metamorphoses* and *The Art of Love*. Such texts reflect a system in which female sexual function is under male control. I conclude that la Vieille's advice on the games of love, her words, indeed her very thoughts, are regulated and limited by the textual tradition from which they are drawn. The story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars makes up the third frame of la Vieille's speech (13811-13844; and 14127-14156). This exemplum exposes the ways in which the male-centered tradition of writing and interpretation has created blind spots in thinking about women. La Vieille uses this tale to illustrate that men base their thinking about women on what has been written about men, and shows how this can be manipulated to a woman's advantage. The discussion that is located in the thematic center of la Vieille's speech references the Golden Age myth and turns around the problem of women's freedom (13845-14126). In this section she brings to light the origin of marriage laws and exposes marriage as an imperfect solution to a general but concealed societal problem, that of violence and chaos brought on by male sexuality. The enclosure of this discussion of women's freedom within a discussion of marriage laws, which itself is enclosed within the tale of Vulcan, Venus and Mars, demonstrates the extent to which any discussion of an alternative to the patriarchal structure of marriage and family is confined by, indeed entrapped within, the male-authored tradition.

2. La Vieille's Past

Scholars of the *Rose* have already pointed out that la Vieille is the only figure who reveals herself through her past.⁴ The focus in this section is centered on the importance of the love paradigm at work and its relation to temporality. That human time is introduced into the narrative of the *Rose* through a female figure has enormous consequences in light of the important role temporality has played in the structuring of the patriarchal order and the love paradigm that this order has produced.⁵ What the story of la Vieille's past reveals about patriarchy in its details, it also reveals visually by its position as an outer frame of the speech. The content of this story is indeed very limited, focusing only on her sexual past. It is no coincidence that the texts that inform this portion of her speech, namely Ovid's *Art of Love* III and Horace's *Odes* I.25, also present a view of women that is limited to their sexuality. Such exclusive focus on female sexuality is one salient characteristic of the misogynous textual tradition. These discourses work to camouflage the unacknowledged problem of male sexuality. It is this problem, la Vieille will claim, which is at the very heart of the patriarchal structure of marriage and family. In her attempt to usurp some type of power within these structures, la Vieille resorts to the very texts that have legitimized them. Rather than speak out against the authority of such patriarchal discourses as Ovid's *Art of Love* III and Horace's *Odes* I.25, la Vieille attempts to appropriate them in order to justify her art of prostitution. By not seeking alternative discourses, la Vieille remains entrapped within the language of misogyny. The failure of her revolt, as we shall see, lies in her attempt to make the patriarchal love paradigm work to her own advantage, rather than rejecting it altogether.

In her close analysis of Horace's *Odes*, Ronnie Ancona (1994), identifies a love paradigm at work that places the female beloved within temporality while the male lover remains outside of it. Such a paradigm establishes the power of the male lover over the female beloved by making her worth contingent on his gaze. A similar connection between time and the erotic can be identified in Ovid's *Art of Love* III, and it is this paradigm that la Vieille appropriates when she draws on Ovid and Horace to develop the justification of her art of prostitution.

In lines 12814-12826,⁶ la Vieille's own recollection of the men who once desired her places them outside of temporality. From her perspective, time has curiously stood still for the men who once were her lovers. Although she is now old, they are still referred to as young men (*vallet*) who, when she was still in her prime, could not satisfy their desire for her body.

Although la Vieille's body is deemed unworthy for sexual activity, the men are out and about the streets looking for women. It is their gaze and their words that now exclude her from the games of love. While they were sexually mature men when she was still beautiful, the text neither indicates nor recognizes the extent to which time has also changed their bodies. The relationship then between the male lover and the female beloved follows the same hierarchical model that Ancona identifies in Horace's *Odes*, that is to say, the male lover is placed outside temporality and the beloved functions as the locus of the lover's fear of the loss of autonomy. This imbalance of power comes to light when la Vieille describes her experience of being shunned by men who once loved her passionately. In the eyes of these men, her value is less than that of an egg, and they even declare her to be an old wrinkled woman. Within this love paradigm, la

Vieille's value always depended on what men thought of her, and now both she and the young men view her as someone of diminished worth. (*Lez moi s'en aloient saillant/ sanz moi prisier un euf vaillant/ Neis cil qui plus jadis m'amoient/ vielle ridee me clamoient,/ et pis disoient chascuns assez/ ainz qu'il s'en fust outre passez.*, 'They would go strolling right by me/ utterly indifferent to me./ Even those who used to love me the most/ called me a wrinkled old woman/ and each one would say far worse things/ before he had gone past me.,' 12821-12826).

Temporality is indeed experienced differently by men and women within the context of the *Rose* and those of its sources. For the male lover, it is experienced privately through self recognition (Ancona). For the female object of desire, or the beloved, it is a process which is experienced publicly from the onset of sexual maturation to the onset of the aging process. Throughout the public experience of female temporality, there are specific signs that indicate the extent to which a woman does or does not possess sexual value. One of these is the presence or absence of gifts that la Vieille describes in lines 12841-12844. The absence of the gifts is a stark reminder of her transition from public admiration to public abandonment. It is the lack of gifts and what remains of the ones she once received that creates such worry (*soussi*) and torment (*torment*). Her claim that she has nobody to complain to about it (*A qui m'en puis je pleindre, a qui*, 12846-12847) reinforces the image of public isolation. Her use of the verb *pleindre* evokes the legal action of bringing suit (*porter plainte*). Having nobody to hear her suit implies, perhaps, a deficient system of justice. By shedding light on this deficiency, she indirectly speaks out against it. However, the solution she adopts to take on this problem is the creation of a formal doctrine which she will teach to the young and inexperienced. It is through her doctrine that she means to

change, not only the behavior of women towards men, but the motivation of this behavior. Such a system assumes that young people will listen, but as we shall see from Amant's progress through this garden, they do not.

La Vieille proposes a new school whose teaching is aimed at taking advantage of the male fear of temporality, which has constructed the dominant paradigm of love between men and women. Men are in the powerful position of projecting this fear onto women, making of them temporal creatures whose bodies are subject to public scrutiny and, ultimately, disdain. But is there not a flaw with such a strategy designed to usurp male power, when the real problem lies in the love paradigm itself? Here and elsewhere in the text, women are caught in a system of value and exchange created by the paradigm of lover and beloved. All female strategies to usurp power for women within this system, no matter how rational they sound in theory, fail to account for the vulnerability brought about by the experience of passion. As we shall see, la Vieille herself is an illustration of the idea that the emotions of youth essentially blot out any reckoning with one's own temporality.

This opening section, in which la Vieille describes the events of her past to Bel Accueil, not only establishes human time as a reference in the narrative, but also gives the narrative a new direction by focusing attention on female sexuality. The verbs of the passage are in the past, present and future. She emphasizes these temporal reference points as human time by describing the effects that old age will soon have on her body (*Poi me porré mes soutenir/ fors a baston ou a potance*. 'I will hardly be able to hold myself up without the aid of a stick or a crutch.' 12714-

12715), while Bel Accueil is described as still being in his youth. The tone of her discussion swings between bitter regrets and wistful recollections. Lines 12734-12767 constitute an if/then clause whose conclusion is delayed by an extended description of what she was like in her youth in comparison to what she is like now. This interruption, which constitutes the middle portion of her sentence set off by dashes in Lecoy's edition (12734-12767), is based on Ovid's *Art of Love*, Book III, 59-82 (Lecoy 2; 290). The overall effect of the sentence structure is one of interruption and delay. In the hypothetical clause, la Vieille claims that had she acquired wisdom before experiencing love, she would have had one thousand more pounds of silver sterlings on which to live in her old age. That this clause is interrupted by a description of her former sexual prowess is significant. It is as if the memory of what she was overtakes her original intention to give advice on how to use female sexuality for rational, commercial purposes. Not only does this interruption run on for an abundant 31 lines; it also portrays the abundant beauty of La Vieille when she was young and implies that sex was one of the main activities of her youth. Every memory is expressed in a superlative mode. She claims that her beauty was so great that word of it spread everywhere. In her house there was more commotion than anyone had ever seen. Her doors were broken and fights broke out because of the great number of men competing to be with her. She states that even the great Albus would not be able to count the large number of brawls. That the number of incidents resulting from love cannot be counted by one of the greatest mathematicians serves to reinforce the notion that human passion cannot be contained or defined within the limits of human rationality. This passion not only appears to overtake la Vieille's teaching here, but it also seems to escape the mathematical system of the inventor of algorithms. The reference to Albus, the Arab mathematician, enters into this sentence abruptly, deflating la Vieille's evocation of violent nocturnal brawls between her male suitors. Indeed, it

seems to bring the discussion back to a more rational level, for it is just after her reference to Albus that la Vieille completes the thought that she set out to express.

The imbricated structure of this sentence is analogous to the dominant structure of Jean de Meun's entire continuation. Indeed, it could be argued that it represents a microcosm of it. La Vieille's colorful recollections are framed by an analysis in the present of how she should have conducted herself to greater advantage in the past. It is the concept of rational control that frames and distorts la Vieille's evocation of her youth. It is as if her present material needs make her see her former lovers merely as potential sources of wealth. And yet, when she speaks about her past, the language she resorts to is that of male-authored texts confined to the world of male academic learning. It is this language that distorts her recollection by masking the extent of her losses with a discourse that bestows a false value upon her past sexual exploits.

La Vieille also brings a new perspective to Ovid's *Art of Love* Book III, the text that provides the source for this nostalgic view of former sexual prowess.⁷ In contrast to the raucous tone of la Vieille's recollection of her youth, Ovid's text evokes the melancholy image of a lonely woman past her prime who has no hope of finding love. While the poet is projecting an image of the future, la Vieille is recreating an image from the past. Looking back on her youth produces a certain joy and excitement as she describes the young men who were so agitated by her beauty and recalls the intense physical violence that resulted from their strong desire for her body. It is also important to point out that within the context of Ovid's poem, this passage is followed by a reference to pregnancy and childbirth as factors in a woman's aging process.⁸ La Vieille,

however, makes no mention of ever having experienced such consequences in spite of her active sexual life. This is indeed an important change in Jean's rewriting of Ovid, for by neglecting to acknowledge pregnancy as a consequence of sexual intercourse, Jean's text points to pregnancy as a hidden, unspoken problem within la Vieille's speech. In this way, this clerical gaze on female sexuality manages to at once reveal and deny the consequences of sexuality for women. Those thirteenth-century readers familiar with Ovid's text, that is to say, the male academic community, might have been aware of Jean's omission. Other readers, not versed in Latin, would not have had a basis for comparison and, therefore, could not be aware of the way in which the text severs the sexual act from its consequences for women, thus making of it an act associated with youth and pleasure. Another direct allusion, this time to Book VI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, has important ramifications with regards to what la Vieille's allusions to scholarly texts reveal about the problems of reading and interpretation. La Vieille makes a plea to Bel Accueil not to reject her teaching simply because she is old (12788-12800). She then alludes to the tale of Arachne, who dares to challenge Athena to a weaving contest. In her cloth, Arachne depicts the sexual crimes of the male gods against mortal women. By doing so, she provides an alternative text to the tales that glorify the twelve Olympian gods depicted by Athena. Not only does Arachne's weaving depict the crime of rape, but it also emphasizes pregnancy as a consequence. The absence of this element of Ovid's tale in la Vieille's speech is not neutral. By never mentioning pregnancy as a part of her own or other women's experience, la Vieille disconnects the sexual act from its main consequence for women, pregnancy.

The omission of elements from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* raises a complex question. On the one hand, the oblique reference to Ovid's tale of Athena and Arachne points to two distinct realities: 1) the possibility of constructing alternative discourses that challenge the prevailing ones, i.e., Arachne's depiction of the gods as rapists of mortal women challenges Athena's portrayal of them as glorious warriors; 2) the disastrous consequences of challenging dominant discourses as illustrated by the punishment of Arachne, who turned into a spider by Athena for having the audacity to challenge the weaving skills of a goddess as well as for proposing an alternative story to the one depicted in Athena's cloth. This might explain the oblique allusion to a text that calls into question the legitimacy of authority in general and to textual authority in particular. La Vieille's strategy is to work within that order by promoting an art of prostitution. Far from being "free" to express her sexuality, a prostitute is in the business of tailoring her sexuality to the needs of her male clients. La Vieille's promotion of prostitution as an alternative to the fidelity and loyalty commanded by the God of Love is an inadequate means to revolt against the limitations imposed by the patriarchal order since prostitution only represents a new way of participating in that order. The coming of old age and its consequent destruction of female desirability make women particularly vulnerable within this system. This insight is emphasized by la Vieille's allusion to Horace's *Odes*, I. 25, in a passage in which she describes the pain and sorrow she felt upon realizing that she was no longer sexually desirable to the men who were once willing to beat down her door (12801-12813).

The dominance in this passage of verbs conjugated in the pluperfect recalls lines 12731-12769, in which la Vieille uses this hypothetical mode to describe what she would have done if she had

been wiser in her youth, interrupts the thought to recollect the good old days, and finishes by stating that she would have more money today than she has. The use of this hypothetical mode reappears here and is elaborated for the next 30 lines. In lines 12731-12769, la Vieille again establishes an important contrast between her old age and the youthfulness of Bel Accueil by addressing him in such terms as “dear son” (*chier filz*), “tender lad” (*tendre jovente*) and by emphasizing Bel Accueil’s youth and the loss of her own. She then suggests the possibility that the vengeance she would take on her former lovers could form the subject of a text, but claims that even a text would not adequately express the fullness of her story (*ne porroit estre escrete en droit/ la vengeance que j’en preisse*, 12865-12866). The emphasis here falls on writing and its inadequacies. The subject of the verb phrase *ne porroit estre escrete*, which is *la vengeance*, comes only in the second line after the text makes clear that “it would not be able to be written adequately.” Much like la Vieille’s earlier claim that even the mathematician Albus would not have been able to count the amount of damage incurred during nightly brawls (12760--12766), the emphasis here on the inadequacies of writing raises many possible interpretations. First, writing is primarily a male activity, carried out by scribes associated with the university or with monasteries. While there are several references to stories of female revenge in the *Rose*, and la Vieille alludes to four important tales (Medea, Dido, Phyllis and Oenone), these stories are all male authored. Is it possible to read into this fact that her story could not be adequately expressed within the limitations of the discourses that pre-establish the power structure of the male/female love relationship? In other words, is it possible to write a story about female agency which abandons the paradigm of a lover independent of temporality, and beloved bound to temporality? My reading of la Vieille’s speech suggests that it is not.

The strategy that la Vieille elaborates here is clearly based on the paradigm of love that places the female in temporality while leaving the male free of it. Continuing her description of a hypothetical scenario of what she would do if she were young, la Vieille emphasizes the importance of collecting material goods and reducing the male lover to a state of destitution (12874-12887). Her main goals here are to make her former lovers pay money, to completely impoverish them and to leave them hungry. She begins by claiming that she would make them pay dearly for their pride and disdain of her. The terms of exchange here are interesting. Indeed, la Vieille proposes monetary compensation in exchange for the male privilege to remain outside temporality, thus putting them in a position to maintain their pride by projecting onto the female body their disdain for the effects of the aging process. La Vieille here seeks a privileged position in relation to men by establishing an economic advantage over them. She wishes to destitute them so utterly that they would be eating worms and seeking warmth from rotting dung heaps (12882-12883). The image here is a strong one because dung heaps were not only used by beggars to keep warm at night, but were also associated with the vanity of women who use artificial means to enhance their looks.⁹ The reference to dung heaps here in la Vieille's speech echoes le Jaloux's use of this image to support his tirade against his wife's clothing (8858-8900). This is just one example of how la Vieille's speech both echoes and speaks out against the misogynous discourses of the other speeches. In this example from Ami's speech, the misogynous trope of woman as dung heap, one that would still stink even when covered with silk (*dras de saie*) and little flowers (*floretes*), comes from the mouth of le Jaloux as he rants about what he sees as his wife's (and by extension all women's) propensity to cover up their moral flaws in the same way that they cover up their physical ones. La Vieille claims that she would have made her former lovers "lie naked on dung heaps" (*gesir touz nus es fumiers*). Her use of

this image is not a metaphorical one as it is in le Jaloux's speech, but a literal one that depicts the harsh reality of poverty, of people without shelter seeking the warmth that emerges from the decaying fecal matter of a dung heap. In one sense, the use of the dung heap image turns the misogynous use of it by le Jaloux on its head by exposing it as hyperbole, and it could be argued that by resituating the image in this way, la Vieille is speaking back and keeping this metaphor in check. There are real dung heaps and real women, but they are not one and the same.

La Vieille again acts out here what the poetic voice of *The Art of Love* claims to be women's true experience of love. The argument in Ovid is that sexual pleasure itself sufficiently justifies erotic activity, and that fidelity does not form an important part of this experience. The question to ask, then, is what loss to women does this attitude mask? This can be answered by considering the unacknowledged economy of the love paradigm discussed earlier. The term "economy" is used here metaphorically, in the way that the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu uses it to analyze fields. The metaphor of the market is used in what follows to discuss the system of exchange that underlies the love paradigm described. The use of this metaphor and market terms differs from the way Ami and la Vieille use them and this difference can be characterized in the following way: when la Vieille and Ami use them, they assume a simple system of fair exchange while the purpose of their use here is to bring to light the ways in which the patriarchal love paradigm renders the exchange unequal and unfair. Whether we look at the lines 12902-12914 from la Vieille's speech, or its Ovidian source, it is important to consider the notion of deception. In Ovid's text, the male poetic voice asks, "Though they at last deceive you, what do you lose?" (*Ut iam decipiant, qui perditis? Bk. III, 88-89*), and in la Vieille's

speech the idea is expressed in the form of a statement, “at least I had my joy,/no matter how much they deceived me” (qu’au mains ai-je ma joie eüe,/ combien qu’il m’aient deceüe, 12913-12914). In both texts, deception is reduced in its importance in relation to sexual pleasure. One might say that deception is the price one pays for such pleasure. In the Ovidian love paradigm, however, it is the lover who deceives and the beloved who must endure deception. In this context, deception is associated with the breach of some promise that is never fully articulated. We could speculate that deception comes about when the lover goes against the God of Love’s last commandment to put the heart in one place and to give it not lend it (2224-2232). What is interesting about deception in the text is the dynamics of it. Initially, a lover promises loyalty in exchange for the beloved’s sexual favors. Once these are no longer desired, loyalty ceases as well, and new terms of exchange are substituted for the original ones. Now that the beloved is no longer desired, she is supposed to take some satisfaction in the memory of the pleasure she received. It becomes clear then that the system of exchange established by this male-centered love paradigm grants much power to the male lover by allowing him to alter its terms. While loyalty on the part of the lover can be withdrawn, affection given by the beloved cannot. It is indeed the male lover who dominates the situation in the pursuit of the beloved, the retreat from the beloved and the judgment of the beloved’s body.

Just as Ovid’s poet/lover makes the argument to the beloved that even if men have deceived her, she has lost nothing, *la Vieille* also focuses on the pleasure of her past sexual experiences. These memories entrap her thoughts in a discourse, specifically an Ovidian discourse, that masks the fact that sexual pleasure has no lasting value for women except as memory, whereas for men it

functions as a commodity whose acquisition bolsters their status and power within the culture. She implies here that at least she got some pleasure from it all, even though she didn't get the loyalty she was promised. *La Vieille* falls prey to the same assumption that underlies Ovid's text, that is, that the pleasure of sex is to be viewed as something received, and is worth more than any suffering caused by a recognition that love is not eternal but ultimately destroyed by time. The economy of this dynamic is largely unfavorable to the beloved. The lover pursues and offers specific terms, then changes those terms and flees once sexual favors are granted. The value now placed on mutual pleasure masks the extent of loss for the beloved. It is the male lover who has all the power to change the terms of the exchange at a point at which what has been given by the beloved cannot be returned. Moreover, the question of whether a pregnancy has resulted from the relationship is never an issue. Finally, the investment made by the beloved in the relationship as far as committing to this one as opposed to other possible relationships, and perhaps losing her virginity to it, is not considered. In the end, the memory of sexual pleasure is not worth much in a system in which women depend economically and socially on their relationship to men. However, the false values that texts attribute to the memories of sexual pleasure have a drug-like effect. They conceal the different consequences for women of sexual activity by masking them with memories of sexual pleasure.

La Vieille once again changes her tone from one of sad resignation to delight in the clever business skills of women who keep many men on a string in order to profit financially from them. In lines 12915-12918 she paints a positive portrait of youthful, enterprising activity. She then shifts tone again to return to the time frame of the narrative to recount how she ended up in

the service of Jalousie (12919-12926). Through the tale of her past, she establishes herself as an authority on relationships between men and women.

That la Vieille has left where she was to come to a new country is indicative of the unworthiness to which she has been reduced by the aging process. Not only does she leave her former home, but she also makes a new home within the prison of Jalousie. Although she is in Deduit's garden, she is under the authority of the this unpleasant mistress. We also know that Jalousie is not there and that she apparently comes and goes often, sometimes going out of town (12415-12429; 12473-12488). Jalousie's walls (*porprise*) occupy a portion of the garden to which Love's barons and Amant do not have access. It is significant to realize that Jalousie's power relies on the presence of Male Bouche, the teller of gossip. Once he is dead, Jalousie loses her power over la Vieille as well as over Bel Accueil. La Vieille can now work within Jalousie's walls to further her own ends. She now has the chance to use the young Bel Accueil to manipulate lovers, the way she claims she should have done in her youth. In order to succeed, she must build a relationship of trust with Bel Accueil, and she does this through the use of flattery and the language of intimacy in lines 12927-12939. La Vieille begins here in a hypothetical mode: the guard would have been dangerous (*fust perilleuse*) because of Bel Accueil's marvelous beauty, except that Nature had also taught him ability, good sense, worth and grace (*proece, sen, valeur et grace*). The attribution of such qualities to Nature is unusual, for Nature is less a teacher of social skills and more a guardian of continuation of the species. La Vieille indicates that her words are appropriate at this moment because time and space (*tens et espace*) have come together to make this meeting, and her discourse, part of the natural process

of things. Now that Male Bouche is dead, la Vieille's words are liberated, i.e., they can say whatever they want (*quan que nous volons*, 12935) and speak a little more easily than usual (*mieuz que nous ne solons*, 12936). By bringing the time of the narrative back from her past to the time and space of the narrative, la Vieille begins to wind up this first portion of the story of her past. She also indicates to Bel Accueil that there is a certain way to listen to her words when she tells him not to be surprised if her speech is interrupted (12938-12939). This is a reference to the frame structure of the speech, which when read linearly gives the reader the impression of a rambling text. La Vieille indicates here that there is a purpose to her digressions.

This is where the first portion of the frame which I call "la Vieille's past" ends. In this initial portion of the frame, certain problems and themes have been evoked which will reappear throughout the remainder of her speech. While it would be easy to read as a reflection of la Vieille's lack of seriousness the frequent changes of tone between delight in the memories of past love and regret that her youth was wasted on such folly, , it is more interesting to step back and look closely at the ways in which this male-authored text reveals unacknowledged relations of power. We have seen the ways in which the love paradigm itself tips the balance of power in men's favor. La Vieille's attempt to turn the system against itself through the use of female sexuality does nothing to change this paradigm, and ultimately works to maintain and reproduce it. In addition, the story of la Vieille's past introduces temporality and its problems into the discussion. Prior to la Vieille's speech, human time was not present in a narrative whose main focus was Amant's newly-born desire. For example, Raison's main objective is to get Amant to reject carnal passion and to embrace the love of reason. This figure articulates the different types

of love that exist and the relative value of each one. Her concern is more with that which is eternal, i.e., Amant's soul. Indeed, Raison pleads with Amant to reject that which is temporal, such as the love of Fortune. In Ami's speech, on the other hand, the focus is placed on the art of deception, and getting the most pleasure at the lowest price. In neither Ami's speech nor in Raison's is it a matter of the effects of time on an identifiable individual. In la Vieille's speech, on the other hand, there is a constant juxtaposing of youth and old age. It is human time that is brought into the narrative by the story of la Vieille's past.

This story functions in many ways in la Vieille's speech and in the narrative of the *Rose* as a whole. First, la Vieille's delight in the memories of her past works very much like a trap, one that reflects the power structure of the love paradigm. Moreover, it is male discourses on love that entrap her and assign to her prescribed roles. The pleasure she remembers is her only consolation and prevents her from reflecting further on the magnitude of her loss. This story of her past illustrates the effect of temporality on human beings. Here, it is portrayed as a problem that affects women and men differently. The fact that her past frames the entire speech could be viewed as an enclosure or an imprisonment of the rest of her words. In a parallel manner, la Vieille is enclosed within Jalousie's prison, which is itself enclosed within the walls of Deduit's garden.

When la Vieille picks up the story of her past again (14427), the reader gets a new perspective on it. Rather than focusing on the glories of her sexual past, la Vieille laments the pitiful state to which she has been reduced and faults herself for not thinking more about old age and the

passing of time. She describes in lines 14427-14440 how the gifts flowed into her hands from those who loved her and out of her hands towards the one she loved best. She claims that her present situation is entirely of her own doing since she did not think about old age, poverty and the passage of time. If she had put more thought into this, she would have been able to save up for later. La Vieille faults herself for not applying market strategies to her erotic activity, as if that were a more suitable way to act. The argument here is an economic one regarding the importance of thinking about and planning for the future. Indeed, underlying such an argument is a moral message about the value of moderation (*mesure*). This makes good sense in almost any context, except the one in which la Vieille uses it. As la Vieille's lament illustrates, it is only with hindsight that people can conceive of love in economic terms. Like the men who abandoned their wealth to her, la Vieille reveals in lines 14441-14450 that she had a weakness for one man to whom she gave away all of her gifts. She repeats here her claim that if only she had been wise, she would have been wealthy. She reveals here that the foolishness of which she spoke in the first portion of this frame is her love for a man who treated her badly. Now that she is old and has lived through the pleasures and pains of love, she looks back on the experience in a selective way, refusing to recognize the power that love had over her and failing to understand her desire to give him gifts. Time has done its destructive work on both her beauty and her love, and it is only in time, at a moment when there is nothing left to show for all she did, that it is possible to perceive of her experience in terms of the material gain she might have gotten from it. In order to see things this way, she must reduce herself to being an object of exchange. Yet, in her youth, in addition to her apparent promiscuity, she loved and invested in her love for this man. She chose to give to him rather than store her wealth. Such generosity forms an important part of the commandments of the God of Love. Indeed, the experience that la Vieille describes

does not fit the advice she gives on love, but rather, follows the rule of the God of Love. Nor can this aspect of la Vieille's character be found in Ovid's *Art of Love*, but seems to be original to Jean de Meun's text. La Vieille describes here a destructive desire, one that prevents her from thinking about the future. She even states that she did not think about old age and let time go by without caring about it (14435-14440). Moreover, we learn in lines 14451-14460 that the man she loved declared her to be a common whore. Significant power relations can be identified here. The first one is the authority to name or call (*clamer*), which la Vieille grants herself in regards to the other men whom she simply calls friends (*amis clamoie*, 14451), and is granted to the man she loved in regards to her (*putain commune me clamoit*, 14457). The verb *clamer* refers to public actions such as announcing, declaring, naming, recognizing, prosecuting and bringing a complaint or proceedings against someone.¹⁰ When la Vieille defines the other men she went with as "friends" (*amis*), she defines her private relationship to them. When the man she loves declares her to be a common whore, he not only defines her relationship to him, but also reduces her public status to someone whose body he holds in common with other men. When women commit fornication, they are publicly reduced to whores, whereas men who engage in fornication remain in the private realm of "friends." La Vieille ends this description of the verbal abuse she suffered by declaring that a woman has very poor judgment, and that she was fully (*droitement*) a woman (14459-14460). The adverb *droitement* can cover a range of meanings ("appropriately," "correctly," "truthfully," or "wholly") and may evoke a legal context. I choose to use "fully" here to reproduce the legal nuance, "fully" being used in legal contexts to designate the degree of citizenship (a "full-fledged" citizen) or to define family ties (full brothers and sisters). The implication here is that her poor judgement, her love for a man who abused her, is a type of behavior that is not only appropriate to a woman, but is also correct and reflects

notions of the “true” nature of women. La Vieille’s castigation of herself, and of her female gender, echoes standard clichés about female nature.

But what is the effect of this discourse when it is mouthed by a female figure such as la Vieille? It could be argued that by castigating herself for her poor judgement, la Vieille places the blame for the abuse she describes on herself. This has implications for the way the text is read as well as for a general understanding of the gender issues whose acknowledgement requires a careful and resistant reading of this text. On the one hand, by channeling the blame to herself, and to her female nature, she immediately focuses readers’ attention away from the graphic abuse she describes (beatings, broken shoulders, bruising of the face, etc.) to locate the source of the problem in women’s nature itself. In lines 14461-14477, la Vieille implies that she would rather have an abusive relationship with this man than have no relationship at all.

Ancona argues that autonomy is a feature of Western male eroticism, and that emotions pose a threat to that autonomy. This aspect of the Horatian love paradigm that Ancona articulates sheds light on the age-old question asked in regards to women in abusive relationships; i.e., why do they stay? Aside from what contemporary popular psychology has identified as psychological factors (e.g., low self-esteem), I propose that an important role is played by the love paradigm subtending Western culture. In order to retain the autonomy that is such an important feature of male eroticism, the male lover must protect himself from the emotions present in the love experience. The lover subsequently tries to dominate the beloved and distance his identity from hers.¹¹ The pattern of violence and reconciliation that la Vieille describes here, it could be

argued, replaces the emotional proximity sought by the beloved and, indeed, is mistaken for true intimacy. At the same time, the pattern la Vieille describes of never loving a man who loved her also fits this paradigm. Where there is no threat of violence, there is also lower emotional intensity. Another interesting aspect of this passage is the repetition of particular terms. First, there is the verb phrase, *fere sa pes*, translated as “to make peace,” or “to reconcile” [enemies]. But the context (14461-14480) also implies reconciliation through sex, to kiss and make up, so to speak. The scoundrel she loved was always able to get her to reconcile with him by his talent as a lover. The term *pes* appears three times in the above passage, underscoring the sexual nature of this relationship. Moreover, it reinforces the love paradigm of active male lover and passive female beloved. It is the scoundrel, after all, and not she who leads the sexual act. Second, is the frequent use (4 times) of a word that means “never” (*onc, ja*). The implication here is that, indeed, such abuse only intensified her love for him, i.e., she could never get enough bodily contact with him, whether it was through sex or violence. In lines 14487-14494 she states that she was caught in his snare because of the physical love he gave, and that she paid for this love through gifts she had received from others. She attributes her attachment to him to his skill as a confident charmer (*fiers rafetierres*, 14479). The Old French verb *rafeter* also appeared in the previous passage (*et que lors me rafetast*, 14476). Both the noun (*rafetierres*) and the verb (*rafeter*) have definite sexual overtones. While they can refer to the actions of taming, readjusting, repairing, mending, they also have the sense of getting back together again or giving loving caresses. It was always the active lover who took care of the mending, and judging by the use of the preface “re,” he did so repeatedly. Looking back on those days, la Vieille claims that she could not live without him, that she would have followed him as far as London because he pleased her so much. Here again la Vieille is using misogynous clichés against herself. The

claim that she could not live without him, since he was such a talented lover, fits with the stereotypical notion of woman's voracious sexual appetite. We have here a portrait of a crazed woman in desperate pursuit of a man who is independent enough to leave her and go to another country. Moreover, la Vieille claims that he shamed her and that she shamed him in return. While she does not explain in what way she did this, we could speculate that his labelling of her as a common whore reveals the type of activities she undertook.

As for his behavior, she describes public rowdiness and dice playing in taverns. While she pursued him, he was pursuing money. In lines 14496-14506 la Vieille describes his free-spending ways, his lechery (debauchery?) and finally his ruin. We learn here that not only did he lose money playing dice in taverns, but also spent it in lecherous pursuit of other women. There is a definite distancing on the part of la Vieille (14503) when she states that she saw him end badly. Indeed, it seems as though she might be seeing him for the first time. Gifts, she claims, were lacking "to us." Here she includes him as if they were a couple. At this point la Vieille emphasizes her loss of value as a woman by making a reference to two major female functions in medieval society, weaving and being a wife. She claims that she had nothing worth even two carding combs. This statement is not gender neutral since it refers to the tools of cloth preparation, one of the most important functions of women in medieval society. To say that she had nothing worth even two carding combs is to emphasize her basic lack of value to her society. In addition, her general alienation is further emphasized by her statement that she never married. By not doing so, la Vieille has left herself without the protection from poverty that marriage provided women.

In the last passage of her speech (14508--14516) la Vieille describes her departure from her country and implores Bel Accueil not to do as she did. The image of la Vieille making her way through the woods, where branches and vines scratch her temples, emphasizes her alienation from the protection of her society. To carry oneself wisely is to use the body as a tool for making money, which would have given her power and status. Wise behavior here does not refer to following convention and fulfilling female functions such as cloth preparation and household management as a wife. La Vieille seems to have more ambition for women than these roles. She emphasizes here the power that female sexuality has over men by referring to Bel Accueil's rose which, when wilted, will lose its power. After this, old age, represented by white hair, will stop the flow of gifts. The problem she exposes here is that of temporality and its effects on women. In order to maintain value in the eyes of her society, a woman must set up safeguards that will protect her from poverty once her beauty is faded. The conventional safeguards are to be found in marriage and skills in female tasks such as cloth preparation. Men, on the other hand, have more flexibility. When la Vieille mentions that the scoundrel she loved never learned another trade than his life of gaming and sexual promiscuity (*N'onques n'aprist autre mestier*, 14492), she implies that men have a much greater choice as far as the trade they wish to practice, and that financial self-sufficiency for men is independent of the effects of time on the body.

There is much more to be said about this frame in which la Vieille tells the story of her past. But it is most significant that through such a tale la Vieille introduces the problem of human time

into this very broad discussion of love in the fallen world. A close reading of this portion reveals that underlying the surface irony that critics have identified in her speech, la Vieille calls into question the fairness of a love paradigm that leaves women dependent on their relationships with men and vulnerable to abandonment when their sexual services are no longer desired. What she reveals through her allusions to classical *auctores* (Ovid, Horace) is that there is a fundamental inequality inherent in the post-Golden Age love paradigm. In her youth, she followed the commandments of the God of Love by putting her heart (but not her body) in one place, i.e., by loving the man who treated her badly. He, on the other hand, used her very much like a prostitute, taking the wealth that she acquired through her relationships with other men and spending it in taverns and in games of dice. When her beauty was gone, she was no longer useful, for her sexual function was no longer a valued commodity. It is at this moment that she realizes that the equality that she believed to be the basis of her love was an illusion. Indeed, all it had ever consisted of was the sale of her sexual services for the other's gain. Upon realizing this, la Vieille attempts to revolt against this system, but all she has available to her are the tools of that system, i.e., male-authored discourses and the reification of her sexual function.

3. The Games of Love

La Vieille's advice on the games of love is enclosed within the story of her past (in two parts, 12971-13810; 14157-14426). Her stated goal in this portion is to teach Bel Accueil how to avoid the mistakes that she made in her past by taking advantage of youth and beauty to acquire money. She discusses specific techniques women should use to make themselves attractive to many men, and to maintain those men who seek their affection in a state of uncertainty. This frame is by far the longest portion of her speech, taking up 1,108 lines, over half of the total 1,807 lines. The most apparent sources of this portion of la Vieille's speech include Ovid's *Art of Love*, *The Heroïdes* and *The Metamorphoses*, Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles* and *The Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius. In addition, I argue that Ovid's *Amores* had a significant influence on this portion of the speech. Like all of the speeches in Jean de Meun's portion of the *Rose*, la Vieille's speech relies heavily on the male-authored texts of the academic tradition. My development of a feminist reading of this speech is based on the perception that these texts reflect a patriarchal order. That is, they reflect and presuppose a system in which female sexual function is under male control.

The first part of la Vieille's advice on the games of love begins with an interjection by Amant which focuses the reader's attention on this story as a written text (12971-12977). We learn that Bel Accueil told all of this to Amant, which collapses the notions of past, present and future: everything else, even the outcome of the narrative, is now seen as anterior to the existence of a written text. It is important to consider the implications of this. First, the advice of la Vieille

comes to us, the readers, through the medium of the written text before us. This account, the narrator implies, was given to him by Bel Accueil much later, after the story narrated in the poem had concluded. And yet, this episode is also part of Amant's dream; he dreamt that la Vieille told all of this to Bel Accueil. The question that this raises is where the narrator gets his account of the speech. As the dreamer, he must have witnessed the whole dialogue, for it is the narrator's dream that serves as a basis for the narrative. However, the narrator implies that he was not privy to this scene and that it was Bel Accueil who told all of it to him. In writing down his account of the speech, the narrator nonetheless gives the impression of having witnessed the scene himself by providing visual details and commentary along with the dialogue between la Vieille and Bel Accueil. The result is that la Vieille's speech can be perceived through a multitude of different temporal moments. First, we have the dialogue occurring during the narrator's dream. Second, there is a later time in the dream evoked when Bel Accueil tells all of this to the narrator. Third, we have the moment, five years or more after the dream, when the narrator records the speech in writing. Finally, there is the written text of the speech which has survived the narrator's disappearance and the test of time. This interjection by Amant further explodes the notion of time and establishes a connection between time and narrative.

Emmanuèle Baumgartner (Brownlee and Huot, 1992, 22-38) points out that Amant's dream, unlike most literary dreams, was not sent by an entity external to the dreaming subject. As such, the only acknowledged source is the dreaming subject himself (37, n. 7). While it is accurate to state that the dream does originate with the dreaming subject, it is also important to recognize that a great part of its content stems directly from what the dreamer has read, i.e., written texts.

It is possible to consider that the external source of the dream is literature. What the dream produces is a reading and a rewriting of a literary tradition. La Vieille retells here the stories of four women who were destroyed because of the generosity and love they showed to one man. The stories of Dido, Phyllis, Oenone and Medea (13144-13234) are all tales of male abandonment of women and the women's resulting despair. The major source for these stories is Ovid's *Heroïdes*, and in her retelling of them la Vieille leaves out the political dimension that was so important in Ovid's text. By elliding this element la Vieille shapes these tales to her own purpose and portrays the male figures in these stories as cowards rather than heroes.

The first of these is the story of the suicide of Dido, Queen of Carthage, who throws herself upon her sword when she learns that Aeneas has left with a fleet of ships bound for another land. Like the text of Ovid's *Heroïdes*, in la Vieille's version of the tale (13144-13180), all the focus is on Dido's love and her suicide, with Aeneas remaining a distant figure. Of the thirty-eight lines devoted to Dido's story here, thirteen deal with Dido's generosity, six with Aeneas's falsehood towards her and seventeen with the details of her suicide. The figure of Aeneas himself is overshadowed by the focus on Dido's status as queen of Carthage (*Dydo, reine de Cartage*, 13145), her gestures of generosity towards Aeneas (13146-13156), the promise she received from him and her suicide. Moreover, while *The Heroïdes* have been identified as the source for this passage, in this rewriting of Ovid's text, not only has the narrative voice changed from that of Dido addressing Aeneas to that of la Vieille addressing Bel Accueil, but also many of Ovid's details are suppressed while others are elaborated. One of the important details left out is Dido's claim that she is pregnant at the very moment that Aeneas is abandoning her. She

states that she is determined to take her own life as well as the child's. Ovid's version, however, reveals a number of other factors that lead her to this decision, factors which go beyond the problem posed by her sense of loss. In Ovid's text, Dido as narrator reveals problems of a political nature that Aeneas's departure has left her to face.

The Heroïdes VII, 115-24, reveals a Dido whose strength and vulnerability derive from her status as a stranger and a woman. We learn here that Dido fled her native land when her brother murdered her husband. When she arrived in the land where she would found the city of Carthage, her identity was one of stranger and woman. As such, she claims she was assailed by wars and solicited by many suitors who now complain that she preferred the love of a stranger. Aeneas's departure has left Dido politically vulnerable. If she commits suicide, it is not only because of her broken heart, but also because she now has nowhere to go. In the context of la Vieille's speech, both Dido's pregnancy and her political vulnerability have been eliminated. The effect of this difference is to link Dido's suicide directly to her disappointment in love, which serves to reinforce la Vieille's argument that women should not be generous towards men because they will only be destroyed by their love for them in the end. Furthermore, la Vieille elaborates upon Dido's suicide, and it is eroticized in her speech by the setting of her bedroom, her use of a sword that Aeneas had given her, the emphasis on her naked body and the placement of the sword between her two breasts. This description creates a Dido whose body we can visualize and whose flesh and blood seem palpable. Moreover, the deletion of the political context reduces the mythical grandeur of the tale to transform it into a story that focuses on the personal and sentimental.

The placement of Dido's story as the first among the four also draws attention to parallels that exist between Dido's story and what readers will learn about la Vieille at the end of her speech. Like Dido, la Vieille fled her native land to find a new life, and she also ended up badly because of her generosity to the man she loved. Dido's story in this portion prepares the way for la Vieille's revelation towards the end of her speech that she loved only one man and gave away everything she owned to him. When her beauty was gone, she had no other option but to flee her country, after which she made a new life working as a guardian for Jalousie. Among these four tales of abandonment, Dido's story most closely parallels la Vieille's. By adding Dido's story along with the three others, la Vieille sets up the reader to see herself as a heroine rather than a pathetic victim.

La Vieille then adds the tale of Phyllis and Demophoon to her list of exempla of women who loved unwisely. Unlike the version in Ovid's *Heroïdes* II, Phyllis's tale is reduced here to only four lines (13181-13184). In Ovid's version of this tale Phyllis, like Dido, is led to suicide by factors that go beyond her disappointment in love. Specifically, Phyllis is a woman ruler whose love for a foreign man, Demophoon, has created resentment in her fellow countrymen. Although not pregnant like Dido, Phyllis claims that the loss of her chastity to a foreign man has defiled her in the eyes of her people, the Thracians (*Heroïdes ii*, 81-85). We also learn in Ovid's text that Phyllis took in Demophoon when he was needy, fed and clothed him and had his ships repaired. In la Vieille's speech, the details of Phyllis's generosity and the political vulnerability resulting from Demophoon's departure are not mentioned. Like the tale of Dido, Phyllis's tale is

reduced here to the sentimental story of a young woman who hangs herself after her lover breaks his promise.

The tale of Paris's abandonment of Oenone also appears here in a reduced form and emphasizes the broken promise contained in the words carved on the trunk of a tree (13185-13198). As told in la Vieille's speech, this tale underscores the worthlessness of promises, whether written or verbal. This recalls Ami's advice to Amant to make false promises (7415-7421). Compared to its source, Ovid's *Heroides* V, much of the material has been omitted. Like the tales of Dido and Phyllis, the story of Oenone in la Vieille's speech turns around the sentimental topic of a broken promise.

Finally, la Vieille goes into comparatively more detail when she tells the story of Medea and Jason (13911-13234). The sources of this passage, Ovid's *Heroides* xii and *Metamorphoses* vii, depict a sinister and evil Medea. In *The Heroides* xii Medea is a bitter woman seeking revenge. The poem, framed as a letter addressed to Jason, refers to how she had murdered her own brother by dismembering him, and how she tricked Pelias's daughters into dismembering their father. In *The Metamorphoses* vii, Medea is depicted as a trickster who fools Pelias's daughters by having them participate in the murder of their father. Clearly, the story as told in la Vieille's speech softens Medea considerably. Her story is made to resemble those of Dido, Phyllis and Oenone. The three stories that precede la Vieille's account of Medea's tale prepare the reader to sympathize with Medea as a victim rather than a villain. La Vieille focuses on the goodness of the acts she performed in order to save Jason and to help him obtain the Golden Fleece. Medea's

murders of her brother, Pelias and Creusa are not even mentioned. Nonetheless, Medea's murder of her children is strongly condemned by la Vieille, who claims that in doing so "she acted worse than a cruel stepmother" (*et fist pis que marrastre amere*. 13232). This murder was motivated "by grief and rage" (*de deul et de rage*, 13230), sentiments that make Medea seem more human than in Ovid's version of the tale.

If we look at the stories of Dido, Phyllis, Oenone and Medea, it is easy to identify the common denominators among them. First, all of these heroines fell in love with men who were outside their group. Aeneas came to Dido from Troy, Demophoon came to Phyllis from Athens, Paris was a common shepherd when Oenone the nymph saw him and Jason came from Greece to Colchis where he met Medea. Second, all of these women fell in love with these men before the men climb to greatness and glory: Dido restored Aeneas and his men to health and had his ships rebuilt, Phyllis did the same for Demophoon, Oenone was with Paris before he was recognized as Priam's son, and Medea was directly responsible for Jason's success in obtaining the Golden Fleece. It is clear in the *Heroïdes* that politics plays a role in both the broken promises and in the decisions of Dido and Phyllis to commit suicide. Both women were left politically vulnerable by their abandonment and chose not to face the wrath of their countrymen. The *Heroïdes* also makes it clear that the man's decision to leave the woman involves a dilemma. Aeneas is summoned away from Carthage, and from Dido, by the gods, who have a greater destiny in mind for him. Demophoon's ships have not returned in the time he promised, and Phyllis believes herself betrayed. Paris left Oenone after he was recognized as Priam's lost son. Jason submitted to the temptation of marrying a woman whose father was a noble. In every tale, the man chooses

a higher destiny over his relationship with the woman he loves. A reader of Ovid's texts understands that the men face a dilemma, while in la Vieille's speech fickleness is the only apparent motive for the man's departure. In her version of these tales, the role played by politics and class considerations is deleted and blame is placed on the men's propensity to be untrue by virtue of their nature. In addition, la Vieille's version of these tales reduces them to personal, sentimental stories, thereby shaping them to her own arguments.

The loyalty and generosity of the heroines of these tales stand out in la Vieille's version of them as factors in their demise. Towards the beginning of her advice to Bel Accueil, la Vieille took issue with the ten commandments of the God of Love, stating specifically that he should disregard the last two, i.e., generosity and fidelity (12990-12998). What she brings into the discussion of love at this point is the possibility of selling it at the highest price (13007-13016). She introduces here the metaphor of the market when she advises auctioning the heart to the highest bidder (13011-130012). She advises, for example, that a woman should feign love in exchange for money, but never truly give herself away in the manner described by the God of Love. What the buyer gets is essentially a performance. The only type of giving acceptable to la Vieille is that done to attract people by giving away something that could not have been sold anyway. She even states that it is good to give (*doner*) in this way since whoever gives multiplies (*monteplie*) their gifts and profits (13026-13027), a statement whose language echoes Raison's discussion of wealth (4945-5002). In the passage from Raison's speech we also find the verb *monteplier* (4958) and the use of the same homonymic rhyme (*gaaigne/ gaaigne*, 4963-4964) that appears in la Vieille's speech in lines 13027-13028. We have here in la Vieille's

speech a clear echo of Raison, and yet, the meaning of the words used and their associations have been distorted by the new context. The notion of *doner* assumes a much more base meaning since it is only a means to an end. Giving is done with the intention of getting back much more than what was given.

The clear echo between the speeches of la Vieille and Raison brings to light the problem of the instability of meaning, one created by the different frames of reference of the two speakers. This instance seems to support Winthrop Wetherbee's argument that Raison, along with Nature and Genius, are limited in ways that become apparent when their views are confronted with worldly values and lived experience. When Raison talks about the futility of multiplying one's wealth, she even goes so far as to argue that the best way to face the possibility of starvation is to view it as a faster way to reach heaven.¹² Human beings, however, do not give up their earthly existence so easily. In his introduction to Nature's speech, the narrator states that they spend all of their lives fleeing death.¹³

La Vieille accounts for the complexity of lived experience. What she takes into account is the fundamental sexual inequality inherent in the social structure. This falls outside of the realm of Raison's concern. La Vieille not only recognizes material goods as needs, but also exposes women's unequal access to these goods. I argued in the first section of this chapter that through the story of her past la Vieille brings to light the subordinate position of women within the patriarchal love paradigm. Women who follow the commandments of the God of Love face

social and material difficulties when they are no longer desired, an argument demonstrated by the story of her own past.

Another important allusion to literature is la Vieille's mention of a song about Pygmalion (13057). This occurs within the context of her advice on dress and feigning love that precedes the tales of Dido, Phyllis, Oenone and Medea (13049-13142). It is significant that in this context of dress and appearance, la Vieille would mention a song about Pygmalion, the sculptor who falls in love with his own ivory statue of a woman, and whose tale figures so prominently towards the end of the *Rose* (20785-21144).¹⁴ Both Langlois and Lecoy suggest (Langlois 4; 272, n.13085; Lecoy 2; 291, n.13055-58) that la Vieille's line refers to lines 20785-21144, which may have been written before the *Rose* as a song and inserted into it later. The story of Pygmalion retold in the *Rose* adds much to the Ovidian source (*Metamorphoses* x, 243-297) describing in great detail the ways in which the sculptor Pygmalion dresses and adorns his statue. Pygmalion's love for his statue is portrayed in the *Rose* as ridiculous and obsessive, and his lineage ends tragically with the death of Adonis, Myrrha's son by her father Cynirus. The sexual union of father and daughter, as the narrator emphasizes, was aided by the intervention of an old woman:

par Mirra, sa fille, la blonde
que la vielle, que Dex confonde,
qui de pechié doutance n'a,
par nuit en son lit li mena.

ll. 21161-21164

While Ovid's poem tells the entire tale of Pygmalion and the tragic end of his lineage, the version in the *Rose* emphasizes Pygmalion's obsession with a statue and his desire for it to come to life. The narrator of the *Rose* also promises the reader the meaning of this tale will become clear at the end of the work (21183-21184).

While *Rose* criticism has presented the meaning of this tale as straightforward, with Pygmalion being read as a ridiculous idolator, my approach to la Vieille's speech offers a new perspective on this tale. The connection between this tale at the end of the narrative and la Vieille's speech has not been fully explored, yet the echoes between the two portions of the text are startling. La Vieille's advice consists largely of ways to use dress and make-up, while Pygmalion spends much time fussing over the dress and appearance of the statue. The fashions advised by la Vieille resemble the clothing used by Pygmalion. In addition, an old woman (*la vielle*) played an important role in the tragic outcome of Pygmalion's lineage. Ovid makes it clear in his version of the Pygmalion story that the old woman arranged for Myrrha to have sexual relations with her father Cyniras in order to prevent this passion from destroying her. She took her to his bedroom

in total darkness when he was alone and drunk. At the end of Ovid's tale, it is Venus who receives a punishment of sorts for having made Pygmalion's statue come to life. Pierced by one of Cupid's arrows while gazing on Adonis, the son of Myrrha and Cyniras, she is then inconsolable when Adonis is gored to death by a wild beast. In this version, both Pygmalion's family and Venus end up paying for this deed.

La Vieille's reference to Pygmalion points to another issue having to do with rhetoric itself. That is, women as they appear in the world of the text, are sculpted and adorned by male rhetoric. Indeed, there is no other language available to clerks beyond that which already forms a part of the established textual heritage. To write about women, then, is to mold them with the available tools of male rhetoric.

Like Pygmalion sculpting his ivory maid, women create themselves as objects worthy of value by trying to imitate ideal beauty. The rules and regulations of this ideal come down through male-authored texts such as Ovid's *Art of Love III*. Implicit in such discourse is the assumption that the female body is grotesque, and the problem addressed is how to conceal female ugliness rather than enhance pre-existing beauty. This perspective is made explicit in *The Art of Love*:

Beauty is heaven's gift: how few can boast of beauty!

A great part of you lack a gift so precious. Care will give

good looks: looks neglected go to waste though they resemble
the Idalian goddess. (III, 103-106)

What Ovid's text makes explicit is a woman's fundamental lack of beauty: few women are beautiful, and even those who are must cultivate their looks or waste them.¹⁵ Like the love she is to feign for several men, a woman's physical attraction is also a question of skill and performance. In a passage of 315 lines (13243—13558), la Vieille elaborates a strategy to be used by women to combat the deceitfulness of men. The first step is to develop a pleasing appearance, which requires no small amount of work (13243-13252).

Following Ovid's *Art of Love Book III*, much of la Vieille's advice to women focuses on teaching them how to acquire what they do not have. To begin, a woman should acquire elegance if she does not already have it (13243), advice that is emphasized in Ovid's text. There is a clear association between a woman's physical appearance and art; likewise, a woman's conduct should also be artificial. La Vieille advises here that a woman act haughty towards those who are interested in her, and gracious towards those who are not. La Vieille's instructions on how to behave are very specific, indeed in order to follow her advice a woman must learn to play the role of a caricature of a woman. They are to know games and songs and to avoid conflicts and quarrels (13249-13250). This constitutes a brief summary of the extensive and detailed advice on games and songs (3315-369) and on behavior (369-380) in Ovid's *Art of Love Book III*.

She also focuses much attention on hair problems and remedies for them. As she begins this advice, she identifies three sources of hair trouble: 1) hair lost from shedding; 2) having to shave the head after an illness and 3) having hair torn out by an angry man (13253-13266). She emphasizes that the loss of her hair makes a woman ugly (*don't biautez est tost enledie*, 13258). La Vieille's advice, on its surface level, concerns the everyday problem of keeping hair attractively styled. Nonetheless, she refers here to more serious problems women faced in the thirteenth century: disease, domestic violence and early death (since the text specifies blond locks, she would need to cut hair from the corpse of a young woman). These details do not appear in Ovid's third book of *The Art of Love*, which is widely accepted to be Jean's major source for la Vieille's advice to Bel Accueil. However, such violence towards women figures prominently in the first book of Ovid's *Loves* vii and viii in which the poet laments having beaten up his girlfriend and torn out her hair (vii), and expresses his frustration with a Dipsa, whose hair he would like to tear out (viii).¹⁶ Neither Langlois nor Lecoy have identified *The Loves* as a source of the *Rose*, let alone of la Vieille's speech. The following excerpts from *The Loves* I, vii make this connection clearer:¹⁷

So that gave me the right, I suppose, to pull all her hair out!

Still, her dishevelled hair hardly injured her looks.

vii, 11-12

Let the crowd follow your car, and cheer, exultant in triumph,

“Hail, all-glorious prince, victor over a girl!”

Let her trudge on ahead, her hair dishevelled, a captive,

White from head to foot save for the weals on her cheek.

vii, 37-40

Couldn't I, like a beast, have ripped the gown from her shoulder,

All the way down to the waist, down to the girdle at least?

No! What I did was yank and tear the hair from her forehead,

Clawing her freeborn cheeks with the rough slash of my nails.

vii., 45-50

These passages from *The Loves* underscore the madness and cowardly actions of the lover. It is, above all, his destruction of her hair that he regrets. It is interesting to note that he is not bothered by the way she looks, stating that “her dishevelled hair hardly injured her looks!” In both Ovid’s text and the *Rose*, women’s hair is a target of male violence. Not only are particular hair styles the targets of verbal attacks, but the ripping out of the hair is one avenue of expression of male anger. Ami also describes how le Jaloux behaves this way towards his wife (9331-9352), and this echo invites the reader to look closer at what is revealed here by la Vieille’s appropriation of this discourse that reflects a male-centered gaze. Ovid’s *Loves* seem to have infiltrated the *Rose* without having ever drawn serious critical attention, and there is much work to be done on the question of how this text has served as a source for the speeches of Ami and la Vieille. Moreover, it is in *The Loves I, viii* that Ovid paints a detailed portrait of the Dipsa, a figure identified as an ancestor to la Vieille.

Though the techniques of hair care are inspired by Ovid’s *Art of Love, Book III*, la Vieille’s version advises a style that is specific to the middle ages, fashioning the hair into coils that resemble horns. While this was the fashion in the thirteenth century, such hairstyles elicited the scorn and ridicule of writers who expressed their disapproval in fabliaux, lays and contes.¹⁸ In these texts, the wearing of horns is ridiculed and even considered to pose a threat to men. (This = what? Do you mean that in this passage of la Vieille’s speech?) When la Vieille urges women to adorn themselves this way, she is turning the misogynous discourse around by characterizing this hair style as something bold and positive. La Vieille shifts the image of “horns” from one that elicits scorn to one that evokes power when she advises women to wear horns that neither a deer,

a goat nor a unicorn could surpass. She wants this hairstyle to be bold and noticeable. Women's hair is a target of violence both in the misogynous discourse and in the lives of real women, and the advice to women to do even better than a deer, a goat or unicorn provides a counterweight to the biting sarcasm of the misogynist literary tradition, thus taking some of the air out of the misogynous trope.

If a woman's skin is pale, says la Vieille, she should apply creams to it, but should never be seen doing this (13275-13282). There is a thread of secrecy and stealth in the advice to women to cover up any flaw in their skin with creams and to dye their hair or replace lost locks with the hair of a dead woman. While Ovid also advises women to use creams on their skin, to dye their hair and to replace lost hair with the locks of another woman, his advice has a much less sinister tone (*The Art of Love III*, 154-222). Regarding the application of facial creams and make-up, Ovid emphasizes using a moderate amount and not putting it on in public. But this attempt to conceal the use of skin products stems from the male poet's desire to see only the finished product of her work in order to maximize his pleasure: "Yet let no lover find the boxes set out upon the table;/ Your looks are aided by dissembled art." (*The Art of Love Book III*, 209-210). What comes across in la Vieille's speech is the absolute necessity of concealing the use of such products. First, there is an emphasis on the devastating effects on a woman of losing her color. La Vieille claims that this would cause her much pain (*et s'el reperdoit sa couleur,/ don mout avroit au queur douleur*, 13275-13276). Next, la Vieille specifies that these creams should be in her room, inside boxes: *procurt qu'el ait ointures moestes,/ en ses chambres, dedanz ses boestes* (13277-13278). The tone of secrecy is underscored by the language of the poem, for the

skin products are doubly enclosed *en ses chambres* and *dedanz ses boestes*. Finally, la Vieille implies here that if any of a woman's "guests" (*hostes*, 13280) were to notice that she used these products, this would have very unfortunate consequences.¹⁹ The advice to replace lost hair with another woman's locks differs from Ovid's text in a more striking way. While Ovid encourages women to buy locks freely at the market, emphasizing that these are sold openly and that women purchase them without shame (*Art of Love Book III*), la Vieille advises a woman who has lost her hair to have someone else bring her the hair of a dead woman: *face tant que l'en li aporte/ cheveus de quelque fame morte* (13263-13264). To ask someone else to procure the hair of a dead woman implies a furtive enterprise and renders grotesque the image of a woman's hair.

La Vieille employs an interesting trick of language when she advises women who have nice necks and white skin to have more skin exposed in order to be more deceiving. More exposure creates more deceit (13283-13288). As she develops her advice on women's appearance (13283-13336) there is a continued emphasis on the need to make that which is ugly less so, rather than enhancing that which is in itself attractive. For example, when la Vieille advises broad-shouldered women to wear dresses of supple fabric (13289-13292), implicit in this is the idea that broad shoulders are unattractive, and that it is always a matter of making them less ugly. La Vieille continues in this mode when she gives advice on how to get rid of or conceal any flaw on the hands. The method advised to remove bumps or pimples with a needle (13294-13298) could be viewed as being more repugnant than the blemishes themselves. Indeed, it comes close to what today is called "self-mutilation."

The focus in this discourse on such small problems as bumps and pimples on the skin of the hands confers a grotesque quality to its subject, the female body. And yet, this is all presented within the context of a beauty guide. This search for perfection of skin and hair at all costs contrasts with Pygmalion's ivory statue, which is free of all such flaws. La Vieille's advice to stretch a headscarf or a towel over large breasts (13299-13304) represents a method of restraining something which is implied to be excessive.²⁰ When giving advice on feminine hygiene (13305-13310), la Vieille uses the metaphor of a room (*chambre Venus*) to describe the care of the genital area. Again, the language borders on the repulsive when she insists that no "cobwebs" (*ireignie*) should remain inside and that a woman should "burn" (*n'arde*), "tear" (*ree*), "rip" (*araiche*) or "sweep" (*housse*) them out.

In another section, la Vieille describes the mouth and its excesses (13315-13336). She emphasizes here such problems as bad breath, distortion of the mouth's shape through laughter or pouting, and crooked teeth. The problem of bad breath is associated here with the stomach when la Vieille advises that a woman never fast and never speak to others when her stomach is empty. She must also avoid getting close to other people's noses when speaking to them. A woman's speech is associated here with the grotesqueness of her body. Laughter must also be restrained and done with the mouth closed for if she opens her "trap" (*gueule*) too wide, her face will appear split in two. In addition, if her teeth are crooked, laughing with her mouth wide open could lessen her value (*mains en porroit estre prisee*, 13336).

Enclosed within la Vieille's conduct manual is a lengthy discourse on female behavior at the table (13355-13437). Here she describes how a hostess should act in order to make her guests think she is working hard. Then la Vieille begins to describe more specific rules pertaining to eating at the table, which cast the female body in a more grotesque light. She must not wet her fingers in the sauce past the first joint (13378-13418). Her plate must not be too full nor should she place large pieces of food in her mouth. She must not let anything drop on her breast or she will be seen as base and gluttonous. She must also make sure to wipe grease from her mouth so that she does not leave any droplets in the wine. When she drinks, she must take small sips, no matter how great her thirst. Any one of these behaviors at the table would make her unappealing to men. Like the discussions of the mouth, of hygiene or of the skin, the small details here, -- the wet fingers, the drops of food on her breast or the droplets of grease in the wine-- all evoke a vision of the female body as repulsive. Misogynous discourse frequently focused on the female mouth as a particularly repugnant and even dangerous site. La Vieille begins a discussion of drunkenness (13412-13437) by evoking an image of the female mouth as a wide, hollow orifice capable of engulfing quantities of drink. She warns women against putting the goblet too far into their mouths (*Le bort du hanap trop n'engoule*, 13412) in the manner of wetnurses (*si comme font maintes norrices*, 13413). This association of a wide mouth engulfing a goblet of wine with the wetnurse brings together the notions of excessive female appetite and the sexual function of the female body. The description of gulping down wine, then, draws attention to the drinker as a female body. The language that la Vieille uses here focuses on the female mouth as orifice when she claims that wetnurses are guzzlers (*gloutes*) who pour wine down their hollow throat as if it were a hollow boot (*heuse*), and swallow (*antonent*) with big gulps (*a granz gorge*). This vivid language brings to mind the hungry babies they feed for wages. A woman's appetite

for drink is associated here with both the sexual function of the female body and the appropriation of that function for earning wages.

La Vieille warns women against drunkenness (13419-13426) because in this state they give away secrets and are left with no self-defense. It is especially dangerous to fall asleep at the table, because they can fall over and break a bone (13427-13437). The example of Palinurus (13438-13456) is cited here to serve as a transition between her warnings against the perils of drunkenness for women and her appeal to them to take advantage of their youth and play the game of love before it is too late. It is ironic that la Vieille chooses here an episode from Virgil's *Aeneid*, since earlier on in her speech she used the Dido episode from this text to warn women against the deceitful nature of men.

The exemplum of Palinurus enters abruptly here, creating a flaw in the logic of the text, while the rhetoric itself works to create the illusion of logic. As the story is told in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas leaves Carthage, abandoning Dido to suicide, and Neptune steers them off their intended course. They stop in Sicily to honor the memory of Aeneas's father, Anchises. Their departure from Sicily worries Venus because Aeneas's abandonment of Dido has elicited the wrath of Juno. She then calls on Neptune to help her protect Aeneas; to this Neptune agrees, but declares that one innocent life must be lost. Through the intervention of the gods, Palinurus falls asleep as he steers the ship, falls into the water and drowns. He is thus a type of sacrifice whose death appeases Juno, thus assuring that Aeneas will arrive safely in Italy. Palinurus, then, plays a role

somewhat analogous to Dido's to the extent that his life was sacrificed in favor of Aeneas's passage to a greater destiny.

Within the context of a warning against drunkenness and falling asleep at the table la Vieille again evokes an episode from the *Aeneid* narrative. On the one hand, the allusion to *The Aeneid* here brings to light the awkward way in which texts such as this one are adapted to discourse on female experience. As Marilyn Desmond argues (Reading Dido...), *The Aeneid* is a tale which validates the male pursuits of empire and conquest. Such pursuits, as the epic makes clear, are incompatible with the requirements of love. In Virgil's text Aeneas's relationship with Dido is presented as a hindrance to the fulfillment of his greater destiny, and it is only by freeing himself of it that the male hero can achieve greatness and immortality. And yet, what la Vieille's evocation of the story emphasizes is the point that lives were tragically lost as a consequence of such male pursuits.

La Vieille implies that her own text will be written down someday and that her words will be read in many schools (*car bien sai que ceste parole/ sera leüe an mainte escole*, 13467-13468). She describes the importance of her text in terms used to describe a school when she tells Bel Accueil that he will someday be a certified master of the topic if he reads enough about it. But what does this mean for the reader now reading the written text of la Vieille's speech? By engaging with a text such as this one, does the reader actually learn anything about any kind of love? La Vieille is using her experience to create a theory for others to learn first without having to experience love. And yet she claims to have learned everything she knows from experience

and to never have read theory in any school (12771-12780). Raison also tries to teach a theoretical lesson to Amant so that he can avoid the experience of passion. Both la Vieille and Raison construct their lessons according to the university model. La Vieille's words, however, seem to defy the university structure in which the right to teach is conferred by the chancellor to a select few (Lecoy, III, glossaire: "chancelier" 212). She personally authorizes Bel Accueil to read and teach, in spite of all the chancellors (13476-13477).

La Vieille's lesson, then, is not just advice on sex, but it is also a lesson in reading. We have seen la Vieille teach how the love paradigm, which places female sexual function under male control, can be turned into a source of wealth for women. Similarly, the university model of reading and the texts of its curriculum can be manipulated to justify the immoral behavior that la Vieille advises. At the same time, these same male-authored texts confine and contain this revolt. Just as the art of prostitution does nothing to change the patriarchal love paradigm, the texts and discourses available to women readers are limited to those which have attained the status of authoritative texts within the university curriculum.

Even la Vieille's instructions on how a woman can make sure that she is seen by men and how to carry herself in public are based on Ovid's *Art of Love* Book III, 387-418. La Vieille advises here (13487-13544) that women make sure they are seen in public places: churches, weddings, processions, games, feasts and round dances. This rewriting of Ovid's text differs considerably from its source in its surface features. Ovid, for example, names such public places as the Portico of Pompey, buildings along the Palatine, as well as altars to the gods, the theater, the

arena and the circus. The thirteenth-century author has evidently adapted the text to the public spaces of his time. However, there is one aspect of the text that has been fundamentally altered and could shed some light on women's freedom of movement in Ovid's Rome in comparison to thirteenth-century Paris. Ovid advises women to display themselves in public places because, unlike men, they do not have the opportunity to be seen in the context of public sporting events. It is because women only participate as spectators in these events that they must seek other ways to make themselves seen. La Vieille, on the other hand, opposes such public display to staying at home, *enclose* (13487). She seems to be advising women to resist the pressure to stay within the home by seeking every legitimate opportunity to move within public spaces (13499-13514).

She ends this section on how to move within the public space (13515-13570) by describing how a woman can make use of her dress and cloak to reveal parts of her body to those passing by. These techniques consist of lifting the dress to reveal the well-shod foot and manipulating her cloak to show the form of her body. In order to make up for a plain face, she should make sure her hair is well braided and styled. She closes this discussion by comparing women to she-wolves who must go after many sheep in order to catch at least one. The image of the she-wolf has been carefully preserved from Ovid's text in which the term *Lupa* is used.²¹ In Latin, *Lupa* means both "she-wolf" and "prostitute." With her cultivated looks, the prostitute catches many men at once in the same way that the she-wolf goes after many sheep. But in order to learn how to be a successful prostitute, women need her art of dressing, walking and carrying oneself in public. "Art," she claims, "helps nature" (*car art aïde mout nature*, 12570). This art of

seduction may appear to be subversive, but it is completely based on male-authored texts and ultimately works to reproduce a patriarchal paradigm.

From l. 13571 until the end of her lesson la Vieille assumes that her interlocutor has succeeded in seducing at least one, if not several men. She shifts her focus here to the problem of what to do with men once they have been “hooked.” Her first emphasis is on how to strip them of their money. Certain men, she claims, are of no use to women in this regard. A woman should not have anything to do with a poor man (13587-13590) even if he were Ovid or Homer. It is ironic that while making full use of Ovid’s oeuvre as a source for her teaching, la Vieille claims that Ovid and Homer are first and foremost poor men who are not useful as lovers. It is the status of poets and poetry itself that is brought into play here. Ovid emphasizes that if Homer came with all of his muses and brought nothing else, he would be thrown out. In la Vieille’s speech, the name of Homer is maintained and Ovid’s name is paired with his. We can speculate that Ovid’s name appears here as an allusion to the source for this passage. But in so doing, the author of the *Rose* is placing himself in the same position as Ovid. Ovid names Homer as the paradigm of a great poet; Jean de Meun then names Ovid and Homer. Now, who will be naming Jean as such in some future text? In this passage, great poets are both honored and declared useless as lovers because of their poverty, which points to the great disconnection between women and the male textual tradition.

La Vieille teaches women how to use language to keep a lover hanging in the balance, making him feel both fear and hope (13636-13637). First she advises a woman to invoke the names of

male and female saints when swearing to a man that she never wished to give herself to any other man (13649-133651). Then she provides ten lines of text that the woman is to recite (13652-13661), after which she is to embrace and kiss him (13662-13663). Throughout all of this, the woman is to be constantly thinking about how to get money from the man. La Vieille advises a fairly common marketing strategy: the higher you set the price, the more value the buyer will place on the purchase (13665-13678).

Everyone around the woman has a specific part to play and lines to recite. Ovid's advice in this regard (*The Amores I*, Book VIII, 88-92) clearly compares this to theater when he says, "Have slave and handmaid skilled to act their parts." In la Vieille's speech, a woman is to involve her whole household: the valet, the chambermaid, her sister, her nurse and her mother (13679-13694). These relationships constitute an area of the woman's life that a man cannot control, even if he does succeed in getting her to remain within the confines of the home. This advice also echoes le Jaloux's accusation that his wife was conspiring with her mother to deceive him (9290-9330).

The notion that women conspire together has long been part of misogynous discourse. Indeed, the roles have become well defined and the character's lines are very specific. La Vieille describes eight different scenarios that the woman should stage in order to keep the upper hand. For all of these scenarios, la Vieille provides lines to recite and gives precise stage directions. For example, in order to act as if she suspects the man has another lover the woman must sigh (*sopirer*), pretend to get very angry (*et sai par samblant aïrer*), and attack the man and run at

him (*l'assaille et li querre seure*, 13793-13795). She is then to accuse him of deceit by saying that he would not have stayed away so long without a reason and that he must have another woman who pleases him more (13796-13800). Finally, she is to declare that she really ought to be pitied (*bien doit estre lasse clamee*, 13803) since she loves without being loved (13801-13804). Such gestures are as artificial as the make-up and false hair that la Vieille advises women to use. What she describes here are instructions to women on how to embody a caricature of a woman. Her advice on how to play such a role stems directly from literature. Scenes like this can be found in *fabliaux* and *dits*.²² While such instructions are comical, they also catch the reader off guard, unprepared for the tale of true jealousy that follows. After this advice on how to feign jealousy, la Vieille begins the story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars. By acting in a certain way, a woman will make a man believe that she is as jealous of his alleged affair as Vulcan was of Venus's love affair with Mars (13805-13812). The rapid shift between instructions on how to fake jealousy and this tale of true jealousy makes the reader lose the distinction between false and true jealousy.

As la Vieille moves into the second half of this advice on the games of love (14157-14426), it appears as if the audience directly addressed has shifted from a female to a male one. This reveals the limitation of her voice as a construct of clerical texts. If she seems to address men, this is because the texts upon which she draws are based on a male-centered perspective, specifically that which equates the male experience of jealousy with the universal one. The strategy that she describes here relies on the tale of Vulcan, Venus and Mars being part of a common literary culture. While the texts that inform her speech assume a universal experience

of jealousy, la Vieille's careful manipulation of them also illustrates the manner in which men's trust in texts as a source of knowledge can be manipulated. By observing a woman act out this part that la Vieille assigns to her, a man will immediately think of the tale of Vulcan, Venus and Mars and indeed, by not properly reading it, will rely only on its surface features.

The more precise meaning of the tale as la Vieille reads it is revealed when she resumes her discussion of the game of love (14157-14165). Here she directly addresses men to warn them that they will only lose a woman's affection if they seek to catch her in the act of infidelity. Indeed, the tale is specifically about male jealousy and not jealousy *per se*. This becomes clear as la Vieille elaborates her instructions on how a woman can manipulate this jealousy and make it serve her interests. She is to play (*amuse*) with him, and the more she plays the more he burns. She is to needle him into admitting that he has another lover (14173-14190) and when he finally does, only in order to make her mad (14174), she is to claim that she will have to take revenge by cheating on him (14189- 14190). This strategy works to inflame the man's passion for the woman because of the important relationship between male fear of being cuckolded and passionate love. La Vieille claims that nobody is able to carry a great love in his heart if he is not afraid of being cheated (14191-14196). Being cuckolded, however, is not a fear that women have. What it comes down to then is that jealousy is experienced differently by men and women. This difference was illustrated in the tales of Dido, Phyllis, Oenone and Medea. In these tales, the heroines were clearly abandoned, and their social status and material well being were compromised. The suicides of Dido and Phyllis, and Medea's destruction of her own children are radical and definitive responses to their losses. Each heroine's revenge on her lover

consisted of tarnishing his legacy with the stain of guilt. This is also clear in *The Heroïdes*, in which each woman claims that her lover will be associated forever with her destruction. In this way, women seek revenge by creating texts that associate their male lovers with their demise. Instead of immediate, temporal justice, they seek a permanent tarnishing of a man's reputation. Men such as Vulcan seek an immediate, public justice and in so doing identify themselves as cuckolds. In la Vieille's text at least, jealousy is a problem that affects men and women differently, and it is this difference that she teaches women to manipulate. The difference is not made explicit in the tale of Vulcan, Venus and Mars, and to read the story simply as a tale of jealousy is to assume that the female experience of jealousy resembles that of the male. La Vieille's warning to men also holds a lesson for women. By recognizing that knowledge of the world relies on authoritative texts that do not adequately describe female experience, they can work within this blind spot to manipulate men. By feigning jealousy, for example, a woman plays on a man's assumption that she experiences jealousy in the same way he does. His failure to recognize this difference allows the woman to play on his fear of being cuckolded.

In order to keep her lover hanging in the balance, the woman must not allow him any time to reflect on what she tells him, and so the woman's maid (*chamberiere*, 14197) must keep the situation ever changing (14197-14210). The maid is to burst in and announce that the husband or some man has entered the courtyard. The woman must then hide the young man in a stable (*an tait*), in a horse shed (*en estable*) or in a chest (*en huche*). Even though this goes against la Vieille's specific advice never to schedule two men at the same time (13571-13586), this situation seems to work in the woman's favor. To the other man she must say that her husband

and four of her first cousins are within, then she must take him to a room and do all he wants, but must not let him stay (14211-14230). Then she should go back to the other man who was hidden away and also do his pleasure, but must swear to him that she is foolish to put herself in such danger (14231-14250). La Vieille comments at the end of this passage that pleasure taken in safety is less keen (*car deliz en seürté pris/ mains est plesanz, mains a de pris*. 14249-14250).

In this final scene, by evoking the jealousy of an alleged rival, the woman makes the relationship appear more dangerous and, therefore, more exciting. This, la Vieille claims, works to increase the lover's pleasure. She also advises a woman to evoke her husband's jealousy and to claim that this represents a great danger to her (14293-14306). La Vieille's advice to 'let her be secure in her fear,' (*preingne en poor seürement*), and remain fearful in her security (*seürté pooreusement*), echoes Raison's description of passionate love as a series of oxymorons (4263-4310) which includes "fear completely reassured" (*poor toute asseüree*, 4267). The difference here is that la Vieille teaches women how to act as if they were in the grips of this type of love without really experiencing it at all.

The lover, however, is not the only man a woman needs to know how to trick. For some women, a husband represents an obstacle to their success with many men. La Vieille advises more than one way to surmount this. She first describes how a married woman can take advantage of her role as nurturer to prevent her husband from suspecting that she is going out to meet her lover. She can give him wine or an herbal brew (14307-14320) or she can "feed" him a story that she

has to go to the baths to get rid of a fever, a gout or a boil (14321-14334). The lines that la Vieille provides here are filled with *double-entendre*. She is to claim that she has a disease that has set her whole body on fire (14328-14330). While the wife's words have at least two levels of meaning, the husband only understands the most elementary, literal meaning. He is portrayed here as a dupe because of a naïve trust in the literal meaning of language. In this he resembles the comical husbands of the *fabliaux* who are duped by their wives words.²³ In a later passage within this same frame, la Vieille advises men to frequent worldly women rather than nuns, because a worldly woman knows how to “feed” (*pestre*) husbands and relatives with words (14379-14398). In other words, women's words are just as dangerous as wine and herbal brews.

Women's propensity to trick men, whether husband or lover, is a recurring theme in misogynous discourse. In order to emphasize that a man is incapable of keeping watch on his wife, la Vieille cites the commonplace misogynous dictate from Walter Map's *Dissuasio Valerii ad Rufinum philosophum ne uxorem ducat* : *Nus ne peut metre en fame garde, / s'ele meïsmes ne se garde*, (14351-14352). She evokes here the name of Argus, the one-hundred-eyed monster whom Juno assigned to guard Io, a young girl whom Jupiter had turned into a calf. As told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book I (583-747), Jupiter is inflamed with passion for Io and pursues her through the woods. When he finally catches and rapes her, he creates a cloud around him to conceal his act. Juno, suspicious of the cloud, comes over to investigate. Before she is able to see what he is doing, Jupiter turns Io into a white calf. Knowing full well what her husband was up to, Juno asks for the calf as a gift, and Jupiter complies. Jupiter then persuades Mercury to kill Argus, her guard. Mercury lulls all one hundred of his eyes asleep with music and then cuts

off his head. What la Vieille emphasizes in her retelling of this tale is not Jupiter's rape of Io, but rather the failure of even Argus to guard her successfully. This story is also mentioned in Ovid's *Art of Love Book III*, 611-644, but Jean has gone beyond the passing reference to it. What is odd about the use of this myth to bolster an argument about women, i.e., that they cannot be guarded if they do not wish to guard themselves, is that the myth actually demonstrates very little about women, but many things about men. While la Vieille purports to use this myth to make the point, as did le Jaloux, that women cannot be protected from male suitors unless they wish to protect themselves, the story seems to illustrate something very different. Indeed, the tale itself is about the predatory nature of the male gods and, in la Vieille's version, we only hear a portion of it. The focus here is on the decapitation of Argus, who was neither the husband nor the lover of Io. As told in *The Metamorphoses*, it is the death of this monster that reunites Juno and Jupiter and returns Io to her human form. In *The Art of Love Book III*, Ovid claims that Argus lost his head because he had guarded Io too zealously. By focusing on the decapitation of Argus by Mercury, la Vieille seems to be suggesting a type of freedom for women from the perpetual male gaze which has imprisoned them.

La Vieille then warns women to beware of the male textual tradition when she advises them to ignore whatever laymen or clerks write about spells, witchcraft or charms (14365-14378). Her reference here to sorcery and Medea brings to mind her telling of this myth in the first portion of this frame. In the context of la Vieille's speech, Medea is portrayed as a powerless victim, whereas other medieval versions of the tale emphasize Medea's revenge as violent rage and madness (*Le Roman de Troie*, Benoît de St. Maure). It is also a reminder of what the tales of

Dido, Phyllis, Oenone and Medea illustrate: that a man's love cannot be won and kept by giving generously as these heroines did.

La Vieille concludes this frame by arguing that gift giving should only be done by men and that women's gifts to men should be objects of little worth (14379-14426). Such a strategy represents a resistance to the male textual tradition which makes such claims as "There is no loss in your giving[yourself]" (*Art of Love* III, 98). In this last portion of her section on the games of love, la Vieille brings to light the inherent inequality in love that male-authored texts have sought to conceal. The tale of Argus has little to do with women's supposed insatiable sexual appetite, but rather with the destructive effects on women of the constant male gaze. Rather than a threat to men, as women are often constructed in texts, they are victims of a patriarchal love paradigm, which allows men to determine their value as they evolve in time. A woman who survives into old age is ridiculed if she has not used her youth to store up wealth. Youthful passions, like youth itself, will pass and only material gain will remain. This is indeed the flip side of the lesson Raison teaches in her discussion of youth and old age, in which she argues that old age, like adverse fortune, makes a person wiser.

In this second frame, la Vieille develops an art of prostitution in an attempt to find a way for women to acquire power for themselves within the patriarchal system. This advice is grounded in the metaphor of the market since la Vieille turns women's sexual function into a commodity to sell in order to obtain wealth. And yet the rules of the market as they apply in the real world of human commerce are inadequate for the purchase and sale of sex. As we have seen through the story of la Vieille's past, passion and sexual jealousy muddle the terms of all exchanges.

Therefore, a woman cannot openly sell her goods to all as a merchant might sell wares at a market, but rather she must conceal the fact that she is selling anything at all. It is concealment that characterizes la Vieille's advice on the games of love. Just as women must cover their flaws with clothing and whatever skin is exposed must be covered with make-up or gloves, so their whole object of gain must be masked by a pretence of love. This art of prostitution is moreover limited by the story of her past and by the only love paradigm she has ever known. La Vieille is limited in that she draws only on a discourse about love that presupposes this paradigm and her revolt ultimately fails because she must work within the confines of these texts. Such texts assume that the universal experience of love is a male-centered one. Consequently, to construct from them a discourse aimed at women produces a text with numerous awkward moments. Indeed, certain passages seem to address only men. While la Vieille's revolt fails, her discourse on the art of prostitution illustrates the extent to which male rhetoric constructs, indeed sculpts, women, pressing them to conform to ideals of beauty, dress and behavior. Her art of prostitution, while it falls short of its goal to subvert the male system, does illustrate ways in which women can usurp for themselves small bits of power within this patriarchal love paradigm.

4. The Story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars

The story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars constitutes the third frame of la Vieille's speech (13803-13812). This is a tale of sincere as opposed to feigned jealousy; it is also about male jealousy.

When la Vieille tells the story, she focuses first on the bronze nets that Vulcan forged and placed around the bed (13813-13825). The point that is emphasized here as well as in Ovid's version of the tale (*Art of Love* III, 561-592) is that a man who overzealously guards his wife risks both losing her affection and acquiring the reputation of a cuckold. In this opening section (13805-13825) a form of the word "fool" appears three times (*fole, fous, fos*) and the expression "caught in the act" (*prise provee*) occurs twice. Vulcan is a fool to expose his wife's infidelity, for what he exposes at the same time is her great beauty and his own ugliness. Not only do the gods laugh and rejoice upon seeing her in this position, but they are also amazed by her beauty and sympathize with her dislike of Vulcan (13826-13844).

Many critics interpret the insertion of this tale at this point in la Vieille's speech as significant because it demonstrates the view of the medieval mythographers who read this tale, i.e., that the nets in which Vulcan, Venus and Mars found themselves entrapped represent the chains of illicit desire. La Vieille's defense of sexual freedom for women, which this tale frames, has been read as ironic since la Vieille is "bound" by the chains of love herself and yet is arguing for more of the same.²⁴ Such a reading assumes that the author of the *Rose* read the story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars in the same way the mythographers did. There are reasons to question such an assumption. I suggest that the tale, as told here, has more to say about male jealousy than it does about illicit love.

The way in which la Vieille tells the tale neither condemns the passionate love of Venus and Mars nor implies that this type of love represents any form of bondage. After concluding her

discussion of the problem of women's freedom, la Vieille picks up the story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars. She makes it clear that once their fear of exposure becomes meaningless, Venus and Mars carry on their love affair openly, without any appearance of shame.

La Vieille indicates that jealousy affects men and women differently. She does so by bringing to light the blind spot created by reliance on the male-authored textual tradition as a basis for thinking about women. Moreover, by locating this story as a frame that encloses the discussion of women's freedom, la Vieille actually casts this story in a new light. I suggest that these nets in which Vulcan captures the couple be read as the nets of a rhetorical tradition which, through language, seeks to construct a way of looking at women from which women cannot escape. The best example of this is found in the tirade of le Jaloux who, echoing John of Salisbury, describes the paradox in which women find themselves entrapped. If they are beautiful, he claims, all men will seek them out; if they are ugly, they will seek to please all men (8549-8574). We see this idea also in la Vieille's advice on beauty (13253-13282), which focuses on concealing the flaws and grotesque qualities of the female body. At the same time that she advises women to cover up any flaws on their faces with creams, she urges them to make sure they are never seen doing this. This places women in a no-win situation: if they do not cover up their flaws they will be viewed as grotesque, yet if they do conceal them and someone learns of this, their behavior will be considered deceitful. Whatever the discourse about women, they are always portrayed as problematic. It is within this rhetorical double bind that la Vieille places her discourse on women's freedom.

5. The Problem of Women's Freedom

The discussion that is located in the thematic center of la Vieille's speech addresses the problem of women's freedom (13845-14126).²⁵ Within this section la Vieille recalls the connection between the origin of marriage laws and the end of the Golden Age. I begin by examining her account of the origins of marriage laws based on the Golden Age narrative. La Vieille brings to light a portion of this story that has not yet been given a proper reading. Her use of an exemplum from Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* illustrates the extent to which textual interpretation is arbitrary. Just as male authors and readers (e.g., mythographers) have shaped perceptions of women based on stories that upon scrutiny reveal very little about women, such as the tale of Vulcan, Venus and Mars, so can la Vieille use a text that has nothing to do with marriage to illustrate the problem of women's freedom. I conclude that the enclosure of this discussion of women's freedom within a discussion of marriage laws, which itself is contained within the tale of Vulcan, Venus and Mars, demonstrates the extent to which any discussion of an alternative to the patriarchal structure of marriage and family is confined by, indeed entrapped within, the male-authored textual tradition. In her attempt to rebel against a tradition of reading and writing that has shaped the misogynous world view, la Vieille has only the texts of that tradition available to her.

The first portion of la Vieille's discussion of the origin of marriage laws focuses on the notion of an original freedom (*franchise*) which was lost as a result of the end of the Golden Age (13845-13868). The frequent use of the term *franchise* in her discussions of marriage laws and monastic

vows (13937-13986) echoes Raison's own discussion of monastic vows (4144-4432). Indeed, line 13945 in la Vieille's speech (*la franchise qu'il a perdue*) seems to be lifted directly out of Raison's speech (4427). However, one important difference exists in the meaning which each context gives to the term freedom (*franchise*). While for Raison, freedom can be achieved through detachment from worldly goods, la Vieille, on the other hand, associates freedom with giving free reign to sexual desire. Although the meaning of *franchise* varies within each context, the two different meanings of the term are both equally valid ones. Raison's use of the term *franchise* to refer to freedom of the soul from earthly things should not be read as a nobler, therefore superior, usage. As the context changes the meanings of words, so does it illustrate the limitations of particular meanings. La Vieille's use of the term *franchise* within her argument that the establishment of marriage laws constituted a loss of freedom for women illustrates the validity of a type of freedom peculiar to earthly existence. She also plays on the meaning of the notion of Nature when she cites Horace's *Satires* I, iii (13877-13910) and *Epistles* I, 10 (13987-14008). In the context of Horace's *Epistles*, Nature refers to a person's delight upon rediscovering the good life in the countryside. For la Vieille, of course, Nature refers to the expression of sexual desire. She distorts the meanings of the terms freedom (*franchise*) and Nature (*Nature*) in order to fit these texts to her argument that marriage is incompatible with women's freedom. Women are born free, she says, but the law has placed conditions on them. They cannot exercise the freedom Nature gave to them. She claims that Nature would never be so silly as to make one man born for one woman. The use of the names of figures from pastoral poetry, Robichon and Mariete (13849-13854), evokes this genre and the carnal love it celebrates, albeit a carnal love that is presented from the male perspective as it is told through the voice of a male narrator. The storyline of the 12th and 13th century French *pastourelle* poetry varies very

little. It is essentially the story of a knight who pursues a shepherdess, who either gives in to his advances or rebuffs him, in which case the rebuff leads either to the shepherdess's rape or her rescue by a male lover. La Vieille's evocation of the *pastourelle* genre frames it in such a way that it appears to represent the type of poetry that would celebrate monogamous love, what is actually portrayed in this poetry, and this is ironic, is a woman's vulnerability to rape. She appears here to be problematizing monogamy, but the literature that she references celebrates not monogamy, but rather male carnality.²⁶

In her discussion of the origin of marriage laws la Vieille emphasizes that they came about because men were fighting and killing one another as well as abandoning the children they had fathered. As described here, the condition of women prior to marriage laws was less than idyllic. The argument could be made that women had less freedom in these times than they currently have living under the law. Not only were they vulnerable to rape, but also, if pregnancy occurred, they were left to care for themselves and their offspring. In such a world men had freedom, especially sexual freedom, while women were subjected to their domination. It would be easy to see a certain amount of irony in this description of the difficulties that women endured prior to marriage laws. It is obvious that they are better off under marriage laws than they were prior to them. Nonetheless, la Vieille's description of these former times points to the institution of marriage as an imperfect solution to a male problem. Indeed, it was male aggression and passion that had to be brought under control through the establishment of marriage laws which subjected women to the domination of a husband or other male member of her family. A misogynist textual tradition which sought to construct female sexuality as excessive and out of

control was developed in order to legitimize this problematic structure. One of the effects of la Vieille's speech, then, is to expose these texts as a camouflage for the real problem of male sexuality.

The Boethian exemplum takes this illustration even further to bring to light how reading practices have contributed to placing so much blame for human problems on female sexuality. Her use of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* illustrates the ways in which texts can be read and manipulated to fit almost any argumentative purpose. La Vieille reshapes the Boethian text to fit her argument by playing on the meaning of the word *franchise*. Her use of the image of a caged bird is intended to illustrate that marriage is a cage for women because it places constraints on their freedom (13911-13928). In its original context in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, the cage represents the chains that the goods of Fortune impose on the human soul, which like the bird longs to be free. It is not surprising that many critics have read la Vieille's use of *The Consolation* ironically. Chauncey Wood reads la Vieille's use of this exemplum as an amusing distortion of Boethius (341). He claims it is an intentional misuse of the *Consolation*, indeed a literary joke. Further, he reads the analogy between a bird fleeing a cage and a woman fleeing marriage as laughable (340). Thomas Hill claims that la Vieille's teachings on "free love" are not intended to be taken seriously since, by citing the story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars, she shows herself to be unaware of the bondage implicit in unrestrained sexuality.

Ironic readings of la Vieille's speech fail to account for the important connection illustrated here between texts, reading and love in the fallen world. It is essential to view the use of Boethius

within the larger context of la Vieille's discussion of women's freedom. Such readings work well enough until one takes a closer look at what directly precedes this use of Boethius's caged bird; that is, la Vieille's discussion of the origins of marriage (13875-13885). It was instituted by wise men so that men would cease to kill one another; in other words, to impose restraints on men who could not control their own behavior. In light of what is known about the disenfranchisement of married women in the Middle Ages, la Vieille's claim that marriage takes away women's natural *franchise* loses some of its irony (See Chapter 3 of this thesis, part 4. Marriage in Thirteenth-Century France, p. 92).

. My main disagreement with Wood's ironic reading is that he does not take into account la Vieille's manner of getting to the heart of the matter when she describes marriage as a type of imprisonment for women, instituted for and by men. Wood finds her use of the caged bird exemplum faulty because, as he states, "the vows of fidelity are freely taken in the sacrament of marriage" (340). For la Vieille, though, marriage is not a vow taken freely, but rather a structure imposed on women by men with men's interest at heart. La Vieille has stripped away the sacramental trappings to expose marriage as a cage: Wood prefers to cover it up again with religious imagery. La Vieille's illustration that marriage is imposed on women removes much of the irony that has been imputed to her use of the Boethian exemplum. Her bold distortion of meaning is a way of throwing misogynous texts and reading practices right back at those who perpetuate this tradition, i.e., the academic community schooled in reading, writing and Latin culture.

It is nothing new to state that la Vieille indeed distorts the meaning of the *Consolation*, but the more important question to ask is what is the significance of such a bold and obvious distortion? By comparing her reading of Boethius to different possible readings of the tale of Vulcan, Venus and Mars, interpretation itself can be shown to be variable. Several scholars point out that the mythographers of the Middle Ages read this tale as a warning against the bondage inherent in illicit sexuality. I do not dispute this claim,²⁷ but I do take issue with the assumption that the author of the *Rose* read this tale as the mythographers did. I have already said that this tale, as told by la Vieille, says more about male jealousy than about sensual love. She even warns men of the consequences of misreading this tale: if they do not recognize the difference between the male and the female experience of jealousy, they will easily be manipulated by women who feign jealousy. The important point illustrated by la Vieille's interpretation of this tale is that reading and commentary are subjective. Just as she can use this tale to illustrate ideas that are quite different from those of the mythographers, so too can she use the Boethian exemplum to illustrate the problem of women's freedom rather than freedom of the soul.

Throughout this close reading of la Vieille's speech I have sought to show the specific ways in which la Vieille shifts the reader's focus when she cites texts that are part of the academic curriculum of the medieval university and which are therefore associated with traditional interpretations. The exemplum of the caged bird from Boethius' *Consolatio* is conventionally glossed as the soul seeking to exert its free will. In la Vieille's speech the reader is exposed to a new reading, one that sees this exemplum as a woman fleeing the bonds of marriage. Likewise, the tale of Vulcan, Venus and Mars taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is conventionally glossed as a warning about the dangers of illicit passion. La Vieille presents it as a positive example of the way women should behave if they are trapped in a bad marriage, that is, go find love and

sexual fulfillment elsewhere. In such a text where the gloss has so radically shifted, there is always the option to read her citations as humorous misreadings of a figure who, if she were actually a real woman, would never have access to learned texts in the first place. However, it is hardly likely that Jean de Meun would devote so many lines merely to humor. Then again, humor often hides a reality that is much less palatable to explore in a serious, rational manner. Whatever the author's intentions were, the means to identify them will always evade us.

Nonetheless, la Vieille's references to the learned texts of the male academic community can and perhaps should make us laugh, but so too do they problematize the claims made by the misogynous textual tradition that women by their very nature are flawed. Through these references to Boethius and Ovid, la Vieille is taking a look at marriage laws from a different angle and bringing to light elements of the texts previously unexamined. Let me recall that the story of Vulcan, Venus and Mars is a frame that encompasses another frame, the myth of the Golden Age, and the exemplum of the caged bird is in the very center of this speech. La Vieille's retelling of the myth exposes the unseemly underbelly of marriage and the laws that belie it. Marriage, as la Vieille reads these texts, came about as a solution to problems that arose from male sexuality – violence, rape and the abandonment of children – and not, as the misogynous textual tradition would have it, from a need to control women's excesses. . This exposure is important at this point in the narrative because la Vieille's speech is followed by those of Nature and Genius. As I argued in Chapter 2 (p. 76), Genius takes over the voice of Nature and corrupts her text when he shifts the focus almost obsessively to male sexuality and male genitals. Since la Vieille has already exposed unbridled male sexuality as a source of human ills that has been covered over by misogynous discourse, she preemptively undermines Genius's appropriation of it.

Indeed, in order to construct a discourse about the problem of women's freedom, la Vieille uses the only texts Jean de Meun makes available to her, those of the male academic tradition. The imbrication of her discourse on women's freedom within a series of frames (going outward, the Origin of Marriage Laws; the Tale of Vulcan, Venus and Mars; The Games of Love and la Vieille's Past) is a visual illustration by la Vieille of the entrapment of this freedom within the confines of patriarchal discourse. On the one hand, la Vieille attempts to revolt against the control of female sexual function under the patriarchal order. This takes the form of an art of prostitution which fails as a revolt because it does nothing to alter the love paradigm. As Gerda Lerner points out, prostitution is a product of the formation of the patriarchal state(123-140). On the other hand, la Vieille seeks to provide an alternative to patriarchal, exegetical reading practices by showing the ways in which texts can be manipulated, even distorted, to fit almost any argumentative purpose. While she manages to expose misogynous discourse as a camouflage for the real problem of male sexuality, she cannot fully rebel against it because there is no alternative discourse available to her, only alternative reading practices. Just as the prostitute, whose "deviant" sexual practices place her at the margins of society, is still confined by its patriarchal structure, so this "deviant" reader is confined, indeed entrapped, within male-authored text.

¹C.S. Lewis, in *The Allegory of Love* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936) sees Jean de Meun's portion as digressive. Gaston Paris, in *La littérature française au moyen âge* (Paris: Hachette, 1914, 5th edition, 178-90) claims that Jean de Meun was showing off his erudition. Ernest Langlois (*Origines et sources du roman de la rose*. Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1891) sees Jean's portion as lacking organization.

² In relation to the other speeches in Jean de Meun's continuation, the structure of la Vieille's speech is by far one of the most clearly symmetrical, along with Ami's. The speeches of Raison, Nature and Genius all follow the framing pattern, but in these three speeches there are areas where the type of clean symmetry observed in la Vieille's and Ami's speeches breaks down. It is only possible to propose tentative hypotheses for such an observation; at this point I would suggest that this may be due to the numerous rewritings of the *Rose*. One

could speculate that the speeches of Raison, Genius and Nature were reworked more than those of Ami and la Vieille. Moreover, as far as we can tell from their introductions, the editors of the two authoritative manuscripts of the *Rose*, Ernest Langlois and Félix Lecoy, did not take this structure into account as part of the decisions that they made as they edited the text.

³ See Table 1, p74.

⁴⁴ The significance of this observation varies among authors. Luis Beltrán, in “La Vieille’s Past” (*Romanische Forschungen* 84 [1972] 77-96) argues that la Vieille’s past makes her more human than the other figures. Emmanuelle Baumgartner, in “Temps linéaire, temps circulaire et écriture romanesque (xiie-xiiiè siècles.” *Le Temps et la durée dans la littérature du moyen âge et de la renaissance*. ed. Yvonne Bellenger (Paris: Nizet, 1985)7-21.

⁵ While it could be argued that Raison brings up the problem of temporality when she discusses *jeunesse* and *vieillesse* (ll4401-4514), I draw a distinction here between evoking the problem of youth and old age and having time enter into the narrative of the *Rose*. What distinguishes la Vieille’s speech on the level of argument is that here the time of the narrative of the *Rose* is expanded into a past, a present and a future.

⁶ All line numbers refer to the 3-volume edition of Félix Lecoy (Paris: Librairie Honore Champion, 1973-1975). For a reproduction of Lecoy’s edition of la Vieille’s speech with my own facing translation in English see Appendix I.

⁷ “Now already be mindful of the old age which is to come; thus no hour will slip wasted from you. While you can, and still are in your spring-time, have your sport; for the years pass like flowing water; the wave that has gone by cannot return. You must employ your time: time glides on with speedy foot, nor is that which follows so good as that which went before. These plants, now withering, I saw as violet-beds; from this thorn was a pleasing garland given me. That day will come when you, who now shut out your lovers, will lie, a cold and lonely old woman, through the night; nor will your door be broken in a nightly brawl, nor will you find your threshold strewn with roses in the morning. How quickly, ah, me! is the body furrowed by wrinkles, and the colour fled that once was in that lovely face! And the white hairs that you swear have been there since maidenhood will suddenly be scattered over all your head.” (*The Art of Love*, III, 59-76.)

⁸ “Besides, childbirth shortens the period of youth: a field grows old by continual harvesting.” (*Art of Love*, III, 81-82.

⁹ Commenting on Ami’s speech (l. 8878), Lecoy notes that moralists such as Robert de Blois and Gautier de Coinci associate vanity and female adornment with the image of a dung heap covered with snow, and in the *Mesnager de Paris*, the image is that of “lort fumier lait et puant que l’en cuevre de drap d’or ou de soie.” This image belongs to a constellation of contemporary misogynous texts and originates from the writings of the Church Fathers. It is important to read la Vieille’s use of this image within this particular moral context

¹⁰ For the various meanings of the verb *clamer*, see A.-G. Greimas. *Dictionnaire de l’ancien français jusqu’au milieu du XIVe siècle*. Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1980.

¹¹ This is the argument that Ancona develops throughout her study. For a summary, see her “Conclusion,” 140-143.

¹² Ou, se d'espargnier ne li chaut,
ainz viegne li froit et le chaut
ou la fain qui morir le face,
pens'il espoir, et s'i solace
que, quant plus tost definira,
plus tost en paradis ira,

ll. 4987-4992

¹³ Ainsinc fuient tuit cil qui vivent,
qui volantiers la Mort eschivent.
Mort, qui de nair le vis a taint,
queurt après tant qu'el les ataint,
si qu'il i a trop fiere chace.

ll. 15913-15917

¹⁴ It seems to me, although I have yet to verify this, that the Pygmalion who sculpted the marble statue was the same Pygmalion who was the brother of Dido. After murdering Dido's husband, he forced his sister into exile. Ovid does not make any connection between Dido and Pygmalion, but I am trying to find out if the two stories were connected in any of Jean de Meun's sources. If so, I think this would make for an interesting discussion. It also is clear from Ovid's version of the Pygmalion tale that Pygmalion sculpts a statue because he is disgusted with the faults of the women around him. See *Metamorphoses*, X, 243-246.

¹⁵ What the text implies then is that all women are in need of such advice, thus justifying the writer's work.

¹⁶ I refer here to Rolfe Humphries' translation of *The Loves* (in *The Art of Love*. Indiana University Press, 1958) since the Loeb classic edition of the text (in *Heroïdes and Amores*. trans. Grant Showerman. Harvard University Press 1958, first printed in 1914) omits Book I, vii. The translator explains this omission, and other less noticeable ones. He writes, "The translator has felt obliged to omit one poem entire, and to omit or disguise a few verses in other poems where, in spite of the poet's exquisite art, a faithful rendering might offend the sensibilities of the reader, if not the literary taste" (317). This raises the question of why *The Loves* has not received the critical attention it deserves as a source of the *Rose*. It is interesting that the translator of the Loeb Classic edition (1914) actually left out parts of the work that he feared would offend the reader. Around this same time, Ernest Langlois was working on his 5-volume edition of the *Rose*, and does not include

Ovid's *Loves* as a source for the *Rose*. It would be interesting to investigate what the critical opinion of *The Loves* was at this time.

¹⁷ It is interesting that the translator of the Loeb Classic edition (1914) actually left out parts of the work that he feared would offend the reader. Around this same time, Ernest Langlois was working on his 5-volume edition of the *Rose*, and does not include Ovid's *Loves* as a source for the *Rose*. It would be interesting to investigate what the critical opinion of *The Loves* was at this time.

¹⁸ Some examples include "Le lais des cornes"...

¹⁹ It is interesting to view this fear of having one's make-up discovered in the context of the thirteenth-century debates regarding prostitutes who deceive men into thinking they are younger by using make-up. John W. Baldwin, in *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*. (Princeton University Press, Princeton. 1970 133-137) describes the debates that took place at the University of Paris in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries regarding the use of make-up by prostitutes. He points out that in general the theologians held to Roman law which allowed prostitutes to retain their earnings without doing restitution. Peter the Chanter, however, proposed a modification to this. If a woman were to anoint her eyes with *stibio*, apply cosmetics, claim that she is of noble birth or declare that she loves the man above all others, and were the man to lose money in the affair, then she would have to do restitution (134). Thomas of Chobham put forth a more practical view. If in her natural form the prostitute would have earned only half of what she did earn using make-up, she is to restore the difference (134).

²⁰ This advice represents an about-face in relation to the source, *The Art of Love III*, 237-274, in which the poet advises women with narrow chests to wrap a band around them, presumably to give them a fuller look.

²¹ See *The Art of Love*, III, l. 419. It is important to note that the two major English by Dahlberg and Robbins do not account for this double meaning.

²² Examples of texts in which women are portrayed as caricatures include "La Contenance des fames" (Fiero, G., W. Pfeffer and M. Allain. *Three Medieval Views of Women* [TMVW]. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989 85-104); "Le Blasme des fames" (TMVW, 119-142).

²³ Some examples of fabliaux in which women "win" thanks to their clever manipulation of language include "La Saineresse" (Noomen, Willem and Nico Van Den Boogaard. *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux* [NRCF] vol. 4. Maastricht: Van Gorcum, Assen, 1988 309-312.); "Les Tresces" (NRCF, vol 6. 240-258.); "Berengier au long cul" (NRCF vol 4, 270-279).

²⁴ See Thomas Hill. "La Vieille's Digression on Free Love: A note on Rhetorical Structure in the *Romance of the Rose*." *Romance Notes*, 8 (1966) 113-115, and Wood, Chauncey, "La Vieille, Free Love and Boethius in the *Roman de la rose*," *Revue de littérature comparée* 51 (1977): 336-42.

²⁵ I take issue with the critical practice of referring to this portion of la Vieille's speech as "her teachings on free love." In my view, the real issue addressed is women's freedom, and consequently, I prefer to use this latter term when referring to this section.

²⁶ In this case, she refers to vernacular and not Latin literature, which might indicate the audience addressed.

²⁷ See article by Thomas Hill (op. cit.) and John Fleming. *The Roman de la rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1969) 175-184.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Jean de Meun's portion of *Le Roman de la rose* has, for centuries, been a controversial text, and disagreements surrounding its interpretation are likely to continue. The feminist reading of la Vieille's speech developed in this thesis makes no claim to being the definitive word on this portion of Jean's *Rose*. On the contrary, by demonstrating that la Vieille's text is more complex than critics have acknowledged, and that it is intricately connected to the other speeches, I have tried in this study to open up new possibilities for reading *Le Roman de la rose*. It is not enough, however, to identify the elements of la Vieille's speech that have not been discussed by critics, nor is it sufficient to articulate the ways in which la Vieille's speech is connected to the speeches of the other figures. In order to seek new approaches to the *Rose*, and to medieval literature as a whole, it is also necessary to examine ourselves as readers.

In *The Resisting Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), Judith Fetterly lays the foundation for the development of a feminist theory of reading by exploring American literature and the unexamined values inherent in the writings of its renowned critics. Fetterly's way of reading texts exposes the naturalizing myths and the mechanisms by which women are marginalized. They are othered, she claims, by being described in terms that evoke horror: blood, void, perverse sexuality. A feminist reader, then, is by definition a resisting reader rather than an assenting one. By refusing to assent, she begins the process of "exorcising" the male perspective implanted in her by the Western system of education (xxii).

Fetterly's notion of a resisting reader with regards to the canonical texts of American literature has broader implications for the whole of the Western literary canon and invites further reflection on the act of reading itself. This study of la Vieille's speech follows Fetterly's model to the extent that it takes into account both the text and the way it has been read by critics. To begin, la Vieille's speech has not received the critical attention it deserves because readers interpret her words through the filter of the category of the old whore, an image which associates women with the horrors of the flesh and dismisses it as comic relief. If *Rose* critics do not read la Vieille's speech as merely comical, they often interpret it in terms of its limits. This study provides reading strategies for going beyond this critical tendency to view it based on cultural assumptions about the figure of the old whore. The humor found in her speech is based on a certain inappropriateness between the image conjured up by this type of literary figure and the learned discourses which the author has her appropriate. This said, I wish to make it clear that I neither deny nor dismiss this comical aspect of la Vieille's speech, but rather, seek to go beyond it. In order to do so readers must learn to suspend their tendency to laugh away la Vieille's speech, for they will find that beneath the comical surface there is a content that is both serious and complex.

The claim that there is much more to be found beyond the humor of la Vieille's speech is supported by the observation that her lesson to Bel Accueil follows a carefully crafted imbricated structure and that this is indeed a pattern to which all of the other speeches adhere. The articulation of this imbricated structure provides readers with an important perspective from

which to approach this text which, upon a first reading, appears digressive and confusing. An awareness of the overarching structure of the *Rose* helps the reader to recognize that the initial impression of a chaotic text is merely an illusion, for the text clearly adheres to an identifiable structure. The tendency to give more importance to one speech in relation to the others is harder to justify when a reader is able to see how all of the different elements fit together. Patricia Eberle's view of the *Rose* as a complex optical instrument whose different optical glasses are constituted by the speeches of the different figures, all of which distort their subject in order to reveal something about it, supports this idea that all of the speeches are equally important to the whole.

La Vieille's speech appears at first to be a comical diversion, but a closer look reveals issues that are not so funny, particularly, a system of misogyny designed to divert attention away from the problems brought about by male sexuality. La Vieille is indeed a resistant reader, and this becomes apparent when we study her versions of the tales of Dido, Phyllis, Oenone and Medea. She adapts these tales drawn from Ovid's *Heroides* to her own purposes by eliminating the political elements in them. On the one hand this brings to light the personal and sentimental side of these tales of abandoned women. On the other hand, by focusing on the women's mental anguish, which in the cases of Dido and Phyllis leads them to commit suicide, la Vieille draws attention to the destructive effects of the imperialistic pursuits of men that are glorified by literature. In her discussion of women's freedom that constitutes the central portion of her text, and which has often been read as ironic, la Vieille presents the problems inherent in the institution of marriage. When viewed within the context of the social world of Jean de Meun's

time, her view of marriage as a cage for women loses much of its irony. Much recent work on women's lives in the Middle Ages suggests that in thirteenth-century France a woman was under the control of some male figure from the cradle to the grave¹. A young, unmarried woman was considered to be under the authority of her father or other male figure in family. When it came time for her to marry, her choice of a spouse had to be approved by the man in charge of her or she risked losing her dowry. Once married, her property was under the control of her husband. If she were widowed, common law generally allowed her to inherit one third to one half of her husband's estate. However, a widow's right to her full inheritance could be jeopardized either by her own sons or her in-laws. In addition, common beliefs about women's inferior nature and perverse sexuality were directly connected to marriage laws, which gave husbands the right to beat their wives. This reality is depicted in an extreme manner in the portrait of le Jaloux, to which la Vieille's speech provides a direct response.

A knowledge of the social world in which the author composed the *Rose* is essential to a feminist reading of la Vieille's speech, for this figure is not just a literary type plucked from ancient sources. The themes in her speech are conventional but, when viewed against the backdrop of women's status in the thirteenth century, they have a different resonance. When la Vieille describes her sexual past, she recalls the violent nocturnal brawls that took place among the men who desired her body. When a reader is aware, for example, that in thirteenth-century Paris such violence was associated with taverns, which were frequented by university students and prostitutes who lived in and around the student quarter, these details of la Vieille's speech are

more striking. Rather than constituting a gratuitous part of the poem's decor, these descriptions can be read as a commentary on violence itself.

Likewise, *la Vieille*'s detailed advice to women on how to deceive a lover or a husband loses some of its humor when read in light of women's disempowered position within thirteenth-century France. Indeed, while the different figures in the text openly attribute such deceit to the nature of women, the *Rose* as a whole also points to the patriarchal system as a problem. The most fundamental problem raised by *la Vieille*'s speech is the love paradigm in which the male lover is independent of temporality while the female beloved is seen within time, her value contingent on the effects of time on her body. This puts the male lover in a powerful position in relation to the female beloved. *La Vieille*'s speech can be read as a complaint against a patriarchal system which disempowers women, and her advice to women to use deception and trickery to ensure their financial stability as a response to this system rather than a behavior that is in some way "natural" to women. This response is an inadequate one, for instead of seeking an alternative to the patriarchal system against which she seeks to revolt, *la Vieille* works within that system to identify only limited sources of power for women. As the very structure of her speech makes clear, whatever truth she may reveal in the discussion of women's freedom that constitutes the central portion of her speech, this truth is entrapped within layers of dominant patriarchal discourses on women.

The process of becoming a resistant reader requires learning how to recognize these discourses and respond to them. Indeed, it involves talking back, as it were, to the authoritative voices

within the text that seek to get the reader to go along with the naturalizing myths that legitimize the patriarchal order. In this study I have brought to light at least three of these myths. The first can be identified in the widely-used expression that female prostitution is “the oldest profession in the world.” Adherence to such a notion indeed makes of prostitution a natural behavior for women whereas prostitution is an institution directly associated with patriarchy, and I address this issue in Chapter 3. The second of these naturalizing myths is found in the notion that male dominance in marriage is somehow natural, simply a result of the way men are. In Chapter 1 I discuss some important research that has been done on the emergence of patriarchy, and in Chapter 3 I describe how the misogynous textual tradition came to bear on the formalization of marriage laws during the 12th and 13th centuries in France. Finally, the patriarchal love paradigm identified in Chapter 4 makes it natural for a man’s love for a woman to diminish over time as she ages and her beauty fades. These myths are so firmly entrenched within the patriarchal system of values that they are hardly noticeable; indeed, they have become part of a set of assumptions against which we evaluate experience. To become aware of these assumptions for what they are, myths that function to legitimize and reproduce the patriarchal order, is to rediscover the process of reading as a powerful means of resistance to the often devastating consequences of these naturalizing myths. Given this new perspective, it is no longer possible to view the problems between men and women described in la Vieille’s speech, verbal and physical abuse, rape, trickery and abandonment, as merely observations of the way human beings are. Rather, these issues take on a greater importance relative to the comical surface of the text. Moreover, reading la Vieille’s speech against the grain of patriarchal assumptions produces a new way of viewing all of the other speeches. Therefore, a feminist reading practice is not just relevant to la Vieille’s speech, but also provides new ways of interpreting those of Raison, Ami,

Nature and Genius. Not only are these interpretations new, but they also turn conventional readings of these speeches on their heads by producing the very opposite point of view. In the case of la Vieille's speech, a feminist reading that uncovers the validity of la Vieille's protest against the institution of marriage goes directly against the grain of criticism that views her words as comical and ironic, something the author intended for the reader to not take seriously. At the same time, the author himself has indicated to readers that things are never what they seem, and that indeed, true understanding comes from recognizing the importance of opposite perspectives when he has Amant state near the end of the *Rose*:

Ainsinc va des contreres choses:

les unes sunt des autres gloses;

et qui l'une an veust defenir,

de l'autre li doit souvenir,

ou ja, par nulle antacion,

n'i metra diffinicion;

car qui des ii n'a connoissance,

ja n'i connoistra differance,

san quoi ne peut venir en place

diffinicion que l'an face.

ll. 21543-21552

(Thus things go together by opposites:/ one provides the explanation of the other;/ and whoever seeks to define one of them,/ must also remember the other,/ or else no matter how great his effort / he will never achieve a definition;/ for whoever does not know both of them,/ will never learn the difference,/ without which he cannot produce/ any definition whatsoever.)

¹ For comprehensive discussions of the status of women in 13th-century France, see Amt, 1993; Anderson and Zinnser, 1999; Duby, 1981 and 1992; Ennen, 1989; Farmer, 1999; Gies and Gies, 1987; Karras, 1988, 1996, 1996, 1997, 1999.

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* I became aware of these works since I defended my thesis and I was unable to consult them before finishing my dissertation.

Appendix

A translation of la Vieille's Speech (ll. 12710-14516)

	“Ha, Bel Acueill, tant vos é chier, tant iestes biaux et tant valez!	“Oh, Bel Accueil, you are so precious, you are so beautiful and worth so much!
12712	Mi tens jolis est toz alez, et li vostres est a venir. Poi me porré mes soutenir fors a baston ou a potance.	My good times are all gone and yours are still to come. I will hardly be able to hold myself up without a stick or a crutch.
12716	Vos iestes oncore en enfance, si ne savez que vos ferez, mes bien sai que vos passerez, quan que ce soit, ou tost ou tart,	You are still in childhood, and so you don't know what you'll do, but I know well that you will pass, whenever it may be, sooner or later
12720	par mi la flambe qui tout art, et vos baignerez en l'estuve ou Venus les dames estuve. Bien sai, le brandon sentiroiz;	through the flame that burns everything, and you will bathe in the tub where Venus stews all women. I know that you will feel the torch;
12724	or vos lo que vos atiroiz ainz que la vos ailliez baignier, si con vos m'orrez ensaignier, car perilleusement s'i baigne	now I advise you to prepare yourself, before you go bathing there, according to my teaching, because a young man bathes there at great risk

12728	jennes hon qui n'a qui l'ensaigne.	when he has nobody to teach him.
	Mes se mon conseil ensivez,	But if you follow my advice
	a bon port iestes arivez.	you will arrive at at good port.
	Sachiez, se je fusse ausinc sage,	Know well that if I had been as wise,
12732	quant j'estoie de vostre aage,	when I was your age
	des geus d'amors con je suis ores	about the game of love as I am now
	-- car de trop grant biauté fui lores,	-- because I was such a great beauty back then,
	mes or m'esteut pleindre et gemir,	but now I can only complain and moan,
12736	quant mon vis esfacié remir	when I contemplate my faded face
	et voi que froncir le covient,	and see that it must frown,
	quant de ma biauté me sovient	when I remember my beauty
	qui ces vallez fesoit triper;	that made these young men leap;
12740	tant les fesoie defriper	I made them so agitated
	que ce n'iert se merveille non;	that it was amazing;
	trop iere lors de grant renon,	I was so famous then,
	par tout coroit la renommée,	and my fame spread everywhere,
12744	de ma grant biauté renomee	of my great, celebrated beauty
	tele ale avoit en ma meson	that there was greater commotion in my house
	qu'onques tele ne vit mes hon,	than anybody has ever seen,
	mout iert mes huis la nuit hurtez,	at night my door was banged upon frequently,
12748	trop leur fesoie de durtez	I caused them such great pain

	quant leur falloie de covent,	when I did not keep my promise
	et ce m'avenoit trop sovent,	and this happened to me very often
	car j'avoie autre compaignie;	because I had other company;
12752	fete en estoit mainte folie,	many foolish deeds were committed
	dom j'avoie corroz assez,	for which I suffered much retribution,
	sovent en iert mes huis quassez	often my door was broken
	et fetes maintes tex mellees	and such brawls broke out
12756	qu'anceis qu'eus fussent demelees,	that before they were broken up
	membres i perdoient et vies	limbs and lives were lost
	par haïnes et par envies,	by hatred and by jealousy,
	tant i avenoit de contanz;	there were so many fights;
12760	se mestre Albus, li bien contanz,	disputes that if Master Albus, the expert counter,
	i voussist bien metre ses cures	wished to put his mind to it
	et venist o ses .X. figures	and came with his .x. figures
	par quoi tout certefie et nombre,	with which he certifies and numbers everything,
12764	si ne peüst il pas le nombre	even he would not be able to certify
	des granz contanz certefier,	the great number of incidents,
	tant seüst bien monteplier;	no matter how well he knew how to multiply;
	lors iert mes cors forz et delivres --	back then my body was strong and agile--
12768	j'eüsse or plus vaillant .M. livres	I would have today one thousand pounds
	de blans estellins que je n'ai.	of silver sterlings more than I have now.

	Mes trop nicement me menai.	But I acted too naively.
	Bele iere, et jenne et nice et fole,	I was beautiful, and young and naive and foolish,
12772	n'onc ne fui d'Amors a escole	nor had I ever been to Love's school
	ou l'on leüst la theorique,	where one would read theory,
	mes je sai tout par la pratique.	but I know everything through practice.
	Experimenz m'en ont fet sage,	Experience has made me wise,
12776	que j'ai hantez tout mon aage;	which I acquired throughout all my life;
	or en sai jusqu'a la bataille,	now I know all about its unpleasantness,
	si n'est pas droiz que je vos faille	so it would not be right if I failed
	des biens aprendre que je sai,	to teach you the good things that I know.
12780	puis que tant esprovez les ai.	since I have so much experience of them.
	Bien fet qui jennes genz conseille.	Whoever counsels young people does well.
	Sanz faille, ce n'est pas merveille	Certainly it is not a wonder
	s'ous n'en savez quartier ne aune,	if you know nothing
12784	car vos avez trop le bec jaune.	because you are too young and green.
	Mes tant a que je ne finé	But so much happened before I was finished
	que la sciance en la fin é,	that in the end I had acquired the knowledge,
	don bien puis en chaire lire.	which permits me to give a public lecture.
12788	Ne fet a foïr n'a despire	All that is of advanced age
	tout ce qui est en grant aage,	is neither to be fled nor despised;
	la treuve l'en sen et usage;	there one finds sense and experience;

	ç'a l'en ont bien esprové maint	many have experienced this
12792	qu'au mains en la fin leur remaint	that at least in the end what remains with them
	usage et sen pour le cheté,	is sense and experience as a purchased good,
	conbien qu'il l'aient acheté.	no matter how much they paid for it.
	Et puis que j'oi sen et usage,	And since I have acquired sense and experience
12796	que je n'oi pas sanz grant damage,	that I did not get without suffering great harm,
	maint vaillant home ai deceü,	I have deceived many a respectable man
	quant en mes laz le tench cheü;	when in my snares I held him down,
	mes ainz fui par mainz deceüe	but I was deceived by many others
12800	que je me fusse aperceüe.	before I realized it.
	Ce fu trop tart, lasse dolante!	It was too late, oh miserable wretch that I am!
	G'iere ja hors de ma jovante;	I was already out of my youth;
	mes huis qui ja souvent ovroit,	my door which was once often at work
12804	car par jour et par nuit ovroit,	because it opened day and night,
	se tint adés pres du lintier:	now remained hugging the threshold;
	“Nus n'i vient hui ne n'i vint hier,	“Nobody comes today and nobody came yesterday,
	pensaie je, lasse chetive!	I thought, miserable wretch that I am!
12808	En tristeur esteut que je vive.”	It is only fitting that I live in sorrow.”
	De deul me dut li queurs partir;	My heart almost broke from grief;
	lors me vols du païs partir	then I wanted to leave the country
	quant vi mon huis en tel repos,	when I saw my door so still,

12812 et je meïsmes me repos, car ne poi la honte endurer. Comment poïsse je durer, quant cil jolif vallet venoient, 12816 qui ja si chiere me tenoient qu'il ne s'en poaient lasser, et ges voiaie trespasser, qu'il me regardoient de coste, 12820 et jadis furent mi chier oste? Lez moi s'en aloient saillant sanz moi prisier un euf vaillant. neis cil qui plus jadis m'amoient 12824 vielle ridee me clamoient, et pis disoient chascuns assez ainz qu'il s'en fust outre passez. D'autre part, mes enfes gentis, 12828 nus, se trop n'iert bien ententis, ou granz deauz essaiez n'avroit, ne penseroit ne ne savroit quel douleur au queur me tenoit 12832 quant en pensant me sovenoit	and myself inactive as well, because I could not bear the affront. How could I stay, when these good-looking young men would come by, who formerly held me so dear that they could never get enough of me and I would see them pass right by, and they would give me a sideways glance, and formerly they were my dear guests? They would go strolling right by me utterly indifferent to me. Even those who used to love me the most called me a wrinkled old woman and each one would say far worse things before he had gone past me. Moreover, my handsome child, nobody, unless they were very attentive, or had experienced great sorrow, would imagine or know anything about the grief that clung to my heart when I would go over in my mind
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des biaux diz, des douz aesiers,	the lovely things said, the sweet caresses,
des douz deduiz, des douz besiers	the sweet pleasures, the sweet kisses
et des tres douces acolees	and the very sweet embraces
12836 qui s'en ierent si tost volees.	that flew away so soon.
Volees? voire, et sanz retour!	Flew? Indeed, and never to return!
Mieuz me venist en une tour	It would have been better for me
estre a torjorz enprisonee	to be imprisoned forever
12840 que d'avoir esté si tost nee.	rather than to have been born.
Dex! en quel soussi me metoient	God! What anxiety did the
le biau don qui failli m'estoient!	lack of lovely gifts cause me!
Et ce qui remés leur estoit,	And whatever remained of them
12844 en quel torment me remestoit.	what torment it put me in.
Lasse! por quoi si tost naqui?	Alas! Why was I born so soon?
A qui m'en puis je pleindre, a qui,	To whom can I complain, to whom,
fors a vos, filz, que j'ai tant chier?	except to you, son, whom I hold so dear?
12848 Ne m'en puis autrement vanchier	I cannot take revenge in any other way
que par aprendre ma doctrine.	except to teach my doctrine.
Por ce, Biaux filz, vos endoctrine	And this is why, fair son, I am teaching you
que, quant endoctrinez seroiz,	so that, when you have learned it,
12852 des ribaudiaus me vancheroiz;	you will take revenge on these scoundrels for me,
car, se Dex plect, quant la vendra,	because, if it pleases God, when you get that far,

	de cest sarmon vos souvendra.	you will remember this sermon.
	Car sachiez que du retenir	For know well that when it comes to remembering
12856	si qu'il vos en puist sovenir	provided you can recall it,
	avez vos mout grant avantage	you have a great advantage,
	par la reson de vostre aage,	by reason of your age,
	car Platon dit: "C'est chose voire	For Plato says: "It is a true thing
12860	que plus tenable est la memoire	that the memory is more retentive
	de ce qu'en aprent en enfance,	of what it learns in childhood,
	de quiconques soit la sciance."	no matter what the subject may be."
	Certes, chiers filz, tendre jovente,	For sure, dear son, tender lad,
12864	se ma jennece fust presente	if my youth were present
	si con est la vostre orendroit,	as yours is right now,
	ne porroit estre escrite en droit	The vengeance I would take
	la venjance que j'en preïsse.	would not be able to be written about adequately.
12868	Par touz les leus ou je venisse	Everywhere I would go
	je feïsse tant de merveilles	I would work so many wonders
	c'onques n'oïstes les parailles	that the scoundrels who value me so little
	des ribauz qui si poi me prisent	and insult me and treat me with disdain
12872	et me ledangent et despisent	and who so wretchedly pass right by me
	et si vilment lez moi s'en passent.	would have never seen anything like it.
	Et il et autre comparassent	They and other people too, would pay dearly

	leur grant orgueill et leur despit,	for their great pride and disdain,
12876	sanz prendre en pitié ne respit;	and I would take no pity or give any respite;
	car au sen que Dex m'a doné,	because by the sense that God gave me,
	si con je vos ai sarmoné,	just as I have preached to you,
	savez en quel point ges meïsse?	do you know the state I would put them in?
12880	Tant les plumasse et tant preïsse	I would pluck them so and take so much
	du leur, de tort et de travers,	of what is theirs, using any means possible,
	que mengier les feïsse a vers	that I would make them food for worms
	et gesir touz nus es fumiers	and lie naked on dung heaps
12884	meesmement ceus les prumiers	especially and firstly those
	qui de plus leal queur m'amassent	who loved me with a more loyal heart
	et plus volontiers se penassent	and more willingly went to greater lengths
	de moi servir et honorer.	to serve and honor me.
12888	Ne leur lessasse demorer	I wouldn't leave them anything
	vaillant un aill, se je peüsse,	worth a garlic clove, if I could,
	que tout en ma borse n'eüsse.	until I had everything in my purse.
	A povreté touz les meïsse	I would reduce them all to such poverty
12892	et touz enprés moi les feïsse	and they would all run after me
	par vive rage tripeter.	shouting with rage.
	Mes riens n'i vaut le regreter:	But regret is useless:
	qui est alé ne peut venir.	what is gone cannot come back.

12896	Ja mes n'en porré nul tenir, car tant ai ridee la face qu'il n'ont garde de ma menace. Pieça que bien me le disoient	I will never be able to hold a single one of them, because my face is so wrinkled that they are not afraid of my threat. The scoundrels who disdained me,
12900	li ribaut qui me despisoient, si me pris a plorer des lores. Par Dieu, si me plaist il oncores quant je m'i sui bien porpensee;	were already saying this to me a long time ago, and I have taken to crying about it ever since. By God, it still pleases me whenever I reflect on it;
12904	mout me delite en ma pensee et me resbaudissent li membre quant de mon bon tens me remembre et de la jolivete vie	I still delight in my thoughts and my limbs once again become strong and supple when I remember my good times and the happy life
12908	dom mes queurs a si grant envie; tout me rejoenist le cors quant g'i pens et quant jou recors; touz les biens du monde me fet	which my heart desires so much; my whole body is rejuvenated when I think about it and remember; it does me all the good in the world
12912	quant me souvient de tout le fet, qu'au mains ai je ma joie eüe, conbien qu'il m'aient deceüe. Jenne dame n'est pas oiseuse	when I remember everything that happened, for at least I had my joy, no matter how much they deceived me. A young lady is not idle
12916	quant el maine vie joieuse,	when she leads the joyful life,

	meesment cele qui pense	especially one who thinks about
	d'aquerre a fere sa despense.	acquiring the means to pay for her expenses.
	Lors m'en vign en ceste contree,	Then I came to this country,
12920	ou j'ai vostre dame encontree,	where I met your lady,
	qui ci m'a mise en son servise	who placed me in her service here
	por vos garder en sa porprise.	to guard you within her walls.
	Diex, qui sires est et tout garde,	May God, who is Lord and watches over all things,
12924	doint que je fasse bone garde!	grant that I keep a good guard!
	Si feré je certainement	I will certainly do so
	par vostre biau contement.	because of your good behavior.
	Mes la garde fust perilleuse	But guarding you would have been dangerous
12928	por la grant biauté merveilleuse	because of the wonderful beauty
	que Nature a dedanz vos mise,	that Nature has put in you,
	s'el ne vos eüst tant aprise	if she had not taught you such virtue
	proece et sen, valeur et grace;	and good sense, worth and grace;
12932	et por ce que tens et espace	and because time and space
	nous est or si venu a point	have come together for us
	que de destorbier n'i a point	and there is nothing to prevent us
	de dire quan que nous volons	from saying as much as we want
12936	un poi mieuz que nous ne solons,	a little more easily than we are used to,
	tout vos daie je conseilier,	I must advise you on everything

	ne vos devez pas merveillier	and you must not be surprised
	se ma parole un poi recop.	if I interrupt my tale from time to time.
12940	Je vos di bien avant le cop,	But I will say well ahead of time,
	ne vos veill pas en amor metre,	that I do not want to advise you love,
	mes, s'ous en volez entremetre,	but if you want to get involved in this,
	je vos moutreré volentiers	I will gladly show you
12944	et les chemins et les sentiers	the roads and paths
	par ou je deüsse estre alee	along which I should have gone
	ainz que ma biauté fust alee.”	before my beauty had gone.”
	Lors se test la vielle et soupire	Then la Vieille stopped talking and sighed
12948	por oïr que cil vodroit dire;	in order to hear what the other wanted to say;
	mes n'i va gueres attendant,	but she hardly waited,
	car, quant le voit bien entendant	because when she saw that he was well disposed
	a escouter et a soi tere,	to listen and to keep quiet,
12952	a son propos se prent a trere	she returned to her discussion
	et se pense: “Sanz contredit,	and thought to herself: “Without any contradiction,
	tout otroie qui mot ne dit;	he who says nothing concedes everything;
	quant tout li plect a escouter,	since he is pleased to listen to everything.
12956	tout puis dire sanz riens douter.”	I can say everything without fearing anything.”
	Lors a reconmencié sa verve	Then she took up her demonstration again
	et dist, con fausse vielle et serve,	and said, like the false and low born old woman she was

	qui me cuida par ses doctrines	who thought that with her doctrines
12960	fere lechier miel sus espines	she would have me licking honey from thorns
	quant vost que fusse amis clamez	when she wanted me to be called a friend
	sanz estre par amors amez,	without being loved sincerely,
	si con cil puis me raconta	just as Bel Accueil, who retained the whole tale,
12964	qui tout retenu le conte a;	told me afterwards;
	car s'il fust tex qu'il la creüst,	because if he had been of the sort who believed her,
	certainement trahi m'eüst;	he surely would have betrayed me;
	mes por riens nule qu'ele deïst	but for nothing that she might say
12968	tel traïson ne me feïst:	would he ever commit such a betrayal:
	ce me fiançoit et juroit,	he pledged and swore this to me,
	autrement ne m'aseüroit.	he did not reassure me in any other way.
	“Biau tres douz filz, bele char tendre,	Fair and very sweet son, beautiful tender flesh,
12972	des geus d'Amors vos veill aprendre,	I want to teach you about the games of love,
	que vos n'i saiez deceüz	so that you will not be deceived in them
	quant vos les avrez receüz;	once you have learned them;
	selonc mon art vos conformez,	conform yourself to my art,
12976	car nus, s'il n'est bien enformez,	because nobody, if he is not well instructed,
	nes peut passer sanz beste vendre.	can pass through them without suffering harm.
	Or pensez d'oïr et d'entendre	Now concentrate on hearing and listening
	et de metre tout a memoire,	and committing everything to memory,

12980	car j'en sai trestoute l'estoire.	because I know the whole story.
	Biau filz, qui veust joïr d'amer,	Fair son, he who wishes to enjoy love,
	des douz mauz qui tant sunt amer,	and the sweet pains that are so bitter,
	les conmandemenz d'Amors sache	should know the commandments of Love,
12984	mes gart qu'Amors a soi nou sache.	but take care that Love not draw him towards him.
	Et ci tretouz les vos deïsse,	And I would tell you every one of them right here,
	se certainement ne veïsse	if I didn't surely see
	que vos en avez par nature	that you have by nature
12988	de chascun a comble mesure	each one in good measure
	quen que vos en devez avoir.	as much as you should have.
	De ceus que vos devez savoir	Of those that you should know
	.X. an i a, qui bien les nonbre;	there are ten , if one counts them well;
12992	mes mout est fos cil qui s'amcombe	but he is foolish who burdens himself
	des .II. qui sunt au darrenier,	with the two that come last,
	qui ne valent un faus denier.	which are not worth a false coin.
	Bien vos abandon les .VIII.,	I gladly allow you the first eight,
12996	mes qui des autres .II. le suit,	but he who follows the other two,
	il pert son estuide et s'affole:	wastes his effort and becomes a fool:
	l'en nes doit pas lire en escole.	one should not teach these in school.
	Trop malement les amanz charge	Whoever wants lovers to have a generous heart
13000	qui veust qu'amanz ait le queur large	and put it in one sole place

	et qu'en un seul leu le doit metre.	burdens lovers too heavily.
	C'est faus texte, c'est fause letre,	It is a false text, it is a false writing,
	ci mant Amors, le filz Venus,	here the God of Love, the son of Venus, lies,
13004	de ce ne le doit croire nus.	nobody should ever believe this.
	Qui l'an croit, chier le comparra,	Whoever does, will pay dearly for it,
	si con en la fin i parra.	as in the end it will become clear.
	Biau filz, ja larges ne saiez;	Fair son, never be generous;
13008	en pluseurs leus le queur aiez,	have your heart in several places,
	en un seul leu ja nou metez	do not ever put it in one place,
	ne nou donez ne ne pretez,	do not give it away nor lend it,
	mes vendez le bien chierement	but always sell it at a high price
13012	et torjorz par enchierement;	and always auction it off,
	et gardez que nus qui l'achat	and make sure that nobody who buys it
	n'i puisse fere bon achat;	can get a good bargain;
	por riens qu'il dont ja point n'en ait,	no matter what he gives he must never get anything,
13016	mieuz s'arde, ou se pende, ou se nait.	it is better to burn, to hang or to drown oneself.
	Seur toutes riens gardez ces poinz:	Above all, remember these things:
	a doner aiez clos les poinz,	when giving, have your fists closed
	et, a prendre, les mains overtes.	and, when taking, have your hands wide open.
13020	Doner est grant folie, certes,	Giving is a great folly, certainly,
	se n'est un poi, por genz atrere,	unless it is just a little to attract people,

	quant l'en en cuide son preu fere	when you believe you can make a profit
	ou, por le don, tel chose attendre	or in return for the gift, expect something, so that t
13024	qu'en ne le peût pas mieuz vendre.	itcould not have been sold more advantageously.
	Tel doner bien vos habondone;	I grant you this type of giving;
	bons est doners ou cil qui done	it is good to give when he who gives
	son don monteplie et gaaigne.	multiplies his gift and profits.
13028	Qui certains est de sa gaaigne	Whoever is certain of his profit
	ne se peut du don repentir;	cannot regret the gift;
	tel don puis je bien consentir.	I can agree to this type of gift.
	Emprés de l'arc et des .V. fleches,	Afterwards, of the bow and the 5 arrows,
13032	qui tant sunt plein de bones teches	which are so filled with good qualities
	et tant fierent soutivement,	and strike so artfully,
	trere en savez si sagement	you know how to shoot them so wisely
	c'onques Amors, li bons archiers,	that even the God of Love, that good archer,
13036	des fleches que tret li ars chiers;	does not shoot arrows aimed by the precious bow,
	ne trest mieuz, biaux filz, que vos fetes,	better than you, fair son,
	qui maintes fois les avez tretes.	who have shot them many times.
	Mes n'avez pas tourjorz seü	But you did not always know
13040	quel part li cop en sunt cheü,	where the arrows fell,
	car quant l'an tret a la volee,	because when you shoot into the air
	tex peut recevoir la colee	someone can receive the shot

	don l'archier ne se done garde.	whom the archer does not intend to hit.
13044	Mes qui vostre maniere esgarde, si bien savez et trere et tandre que ne vos en puis riens aprandre; s'an repeut estre tex navrez	But to whoever considers your behavior, you know so well how to draw [the bow] that I could never teach you anything; and so, someone can be wounded badly
13048	dom grant preu, se Dieu plest, avrez. Si n'esteut que je m'atour de vos aprendre de l'atour des robes ne des garnemenz	who, if God pleases, will be of great profit to you. So it is not necessary that I prepare myself to teach you about dressing up in dresses and garments
13052	dom vos ferez vos paremenz pour sembler aus genz mieuz valoir, n'il ne vos en peut ja chaloir, quant par queur la chançon savez	that you will use as your ornaments to appear more worthy to other people, nor can it now be important to you, since you know by heart the song,
13056	que tant oï chanter m'avez, si con joer nous alion, de l'ymage Pimalion. La prenez garde a vos parer,	that you have heard me sing so often, as we were going out to play [the one]about the image of Pygmalion. Take good care to dress yourself up then,
13060	s'an savez plus que beuf d'arer. De vos aprendre ces mestiers ne vost est il mie mestiers. Et se ce ne vos peut soffire,	you'll know more about it than an ox does of plowing. To teach you this craft [dressing up] is not at all necessary in your case. And if this is not enough for you,

13064	aucune chose m'orrez dire	you will hear me say something
	ça avant, s'ous volez atandre,	a little later, if you will wait,
	ou bien porrez example prandre.	from which you will be able to take a good example.
	Mes itant vos puis je bien dire,	But for now I can only tell you this:
13068	se vos ami volez eslire,	if you want to choose a friend for yourself,
	bien lo que vostre amor soit mise	I advise that your love be placed
	ou biau vallet qui tant vos prise,	in the handsome young man who values you so much,
	mes n'i soit pas trop fermement.	but it must not be too firmly placed there.
13072	Amez des autres sagement,	Love others wisely,
	et je vos en querroi assez,	and I will seek enough of them for you,
	dom granz avoir iert amassez.	from whom you will be able to gather much wealth.
	Bon acointier fet homes riches,	It is good to get to know rich men,
13076	s'il n'ont les queurs avers et chiches,	unless they have hearts that are miserly and stingy,
	s'il est qui bien plumer les sache.	if one is someone who knows how to pluck them well.
	Bel Accueill quan qu'il veut en sache,	Bel Accueil will snatch from them all he wants,
	por qu'il doint a chascun entendre	provided that he make each one to understand
13080	qu'il ne voudroit autre ami prendre	that he would not want to take any other friend
	por .M. mars de fin or molu,	for 1000 marks of fine gold,
	et jurt que, s'il eüst volu	and swear that, if he had wanted to
	soffrir que par autre fust prise	accept that it be someone else who takes
13084	sa rose, qui bien est requise,	his rose, which is so highly desired,

	d'or fust chargiez et de joiaus;	he would have been loaded down with gold and jewels;
	mes tant est ses fins queur loiaus	but that his true heart is so loyal
	que ja nus la main n'i tendra	that he will never hold his hand out to someone
13088	fors cil seus qui lors la tendra.	except the one holding it at that moment.
	S'il sunt mil, a chascun doit dire:	Even if there are a thousand, you must say to each:
	"La rose avrez touz seus, biau sire,	"You alone will have the rose, fair lord,
	ja mes autre n'i avra part.	Never will another have any part of it.
13092	Faille moi Dex se ja la part!"	May God fail me if I ever share it!"
	Ce leur jurt et sa foi leur baille.	Promise this to them and give them your word.
	S'il se parjure, ne li chaille;	If it's a lie, don't worry about it;
	Dex se rit de tel serement	God laughs at such oaths
13096	et le pardone lieement.	and pardons them happily.
	Jupiter et li dieu riaient	Jupiter and the other gods would laugh
	quant li amant se parjuraient,	when lovers would swear false oaths;
	et maintes fois se parjurerent	and the gods themselves swore many false oaths
13100	li dieu qui par amours amerent.	when they loved passionately.
	Quant Jupiter asseüroit	Whenever Jupiter would reassure
	Juno sa fame, il li juroit	Juno, his wife, he would swear to her
	la palu d'enfer hautement,	loudly by Hell's swamp,
13104	et se parjuroit fausement.	and would falsely perjure himself.
	Ce devoit mout asseürer	This should make courtly lovers

	les fins amanz de parjurer	feel better about swearing by
	saintes et sainz, moustiers et tamples,	male and female saints, monasteries and churches,
13108	quant li dieu leur donent exemples.	since the gods set such an example.
	Mes mout est fos, se Dex m'amant,	But he is very foolish who, so help me God,
	qui por jurer croit nul amant,	believes any lover's sworn oath,
	car il ont trop les queurs muables.	because they have hearts that are very fickle.
13112	Jennes genz ne sunt point estables,	Young people are not at all steadfast,
	non sunt li viell sovante foiz,	nor oftentimes are the old,
	ainz mentent seremenz et foiz.	since they go back on their sworn oaths.
	Et sachiez une chose vaire:	...And know that this one thing is true:
13116	cil qui sires est de la faire	that whoever is lord of the fair
	doit prendre par tout son toulain;	must collect his tax everywhere;
	et qui ne peut a un moulin,	and he who cannot grind his grain at one mill,
	hez a l'autre tretout le cours!	let him go to the next one very quickly!
13120	Mout a soriz povre secours	A mouse has a very poor back-up
	et fet en grant perill sa druige	and puts its supplies in great danger
	qui n'a qu'un pertuis a refuge.	when it has only one hole to take shelter in.
	Tout ausinc est il de la fame,	It is just the same for a woman,
13124	qui de touz les marchiez est dame	who is mistress of all the bargaining,
	que chascun fet por lui avoir:	that each one conducts to get her.
	prendre doit par tout de l'avoir,	She must take her wealth from everywhere,

	car mout avroit fole pensee,	because she would have a very foolish idea,
13128	quant bien se seroit porpensee,	as she would see upon reflection,
	s'el ne voloit ami que un;	if she wanted only one friend;
	car par seint Lifart de Meün,	for by Saint Lifart of Meun,
	qui s'amor en un seul leu livre	whoever puts his heart in one place
13132	n'a pas son queur franc ne delivre,	does not have a free heart,
	ainz l'a malement asservi.	but he basely enslaves it.
	Bien a tel fame deservi	Such a woman rightly deserves
	qu'ele ait assez ennui et peine	to have a lot of problems and pain
13136	qui d'un seul home amer se peine.	if she takes pains to love only one man.
	S'el faut a celui de confort,	If he is unable to give comfort to her,
	el n'a nullui qui la confort;	then she has nobody to comfort her;
	et ce sunt ceus qui plus i faillent	and people who put their hearts in one place
13140	qui leur queurs en un seul leu baillent.	are the most harshly disappointed.
	Tuit en la fin toutes les fuient,	All men flee from all such women in the end,
	quant las en sunt et s'en ennuient.	when they are tired of them and bored.
	N'am peut fame a bon chief venir.	A woman cannot come to a good end from this.
13144	Onc ne pot Enee tenir	Dido, Queen of Carthage,
	Dydo, reïne de Cartage,	could not hold on to Aeneas,
	qui tant li ot fet d'avantage	she who had given him so much help
	que povre l'avoit receü	since she had received him when he was poor

13148	et revestu et repeü,	and clothed and fed him,
	las et fuitif du biau païs	when he was weary and fleeing his beautiful country
	de Troie, dom il fu naïs.	of Troy, where he was born.
	Ses compaignons mout honorot,	She honored all of his companions well
13152	car en lui trop grand amor ot;	because she loved him too much;
	fist li ses nés toutes refere	she had all of his ships rebuilt
	por lui servir et por lui plere,	to serve him and to please him,
	dona lui por s'amor avoir	in order to have his love
13156	sa cité, son cors, son avoir;	she gave him her city, her body and her wealth;
	et cil si l'en asseüra	and he gave her assurances
	qu'il li promist et li jura	by promising and swearing to her
	que siens ert et tourjourz seroit	that she was and would always be his
13160	ne ja mes ne la lesseroit;	and that he would never leave her;
	mes cele guieres n'an joï,	but she had hardly any joy from him,
	car li traïstres s'en foï	for the traitor fled
	sanz congié, par mer, en navie,	without saying good-bye, by sea in a ship
13164	don la bele perdi la vie,	which made the beauty lose her life,
	qu'el s'en ocist ainz l'andemain	for she killed herself the very next day
	de l'espee, o sa propre main,	in her room by her own hand
	qu'il li ot donee, en sa chambre.	with the sword which he had given her.
13168	Dydo, qui son ami remanbre	Dido, who remembers her friend

	et voit que s'amour a perdue,	and saw that she has lost his love,
	l'espee prent, et toute nue	takes the sword and places it
	la drece encontrement la pointe,	unsheathed with the point upward,
13172	souz ses .II. mameles l'apointe,	against her two breasts,
	seur le glaive se let choair.	and let herself fall on the blade.
	Mout fust granz pitiez a voair,	Had one seen her do it,
	qui tel fet fere li veïst;	hard would he be
13176	dur fust qui pitiez n'en preïst,	who felt no pity
	quant si veïst Dydo la bele	when he saw Dido the beautiful
	seur la pointe de l'alumele.	impaled on the point of the blade.
	Par mi le cors la se ficha,	She pierced it right through her body
13180	tel deul ot don cil la tricha.	so great was her pain when he deceived her.
	Phyllis ausint tant atendi	Similarly, Phyllis waited for Demophoon,
	Demophon qu'ele s'en pendi	for so long that she hanged herself
	por le terme qu'il trespasa,	when he overstayed his term of absence
13184	dom serement et foi quassa.	thus breaking his oath and faith.
	Que fist Paris de Oenoné	What did Paris do with Oenone
	qui queur et cors li rot doné,	who had given her heart and body to him
	et cil s'amor li redona?	and to whom he had given his love in turn?
13188	Tantost retolu le don a,	The gift was taken back as soon as it was given,
	si l'an ot il en l'arbre escrites	and yet he had written about it on a tree

	a son coustel letres petites	above the river bank in place of a charter,
	desus la rive en leu de chartre,	with his knife in small letters
13192	qui ne valurent une tartre.	which were worth nothing.
	Ces letres en l'escorce estoient	These letters were carved in the bark
	d'un poplier, et representoient	of a poplar tree, and described
	que Xantus s'en retourneroit	how the Xantus would reverse its course
13196	si tost con il la lesseroit.	sooner than he would leave her.
	Or raut Xantus a sa fonteine,	Now the Xantus may return to its source,
	qu'il la lessa puis por Heleine.	for then he left her for Helen.
	Que refist Jason de Medee,	What did Jason do with Medea,
13200	qui si vilmant refu boulee	who was also so miserably deceived
	que li faus sa foi li manti	when the false one went back on his word
	puisqu'el l'ot de mort garanti,	after she had saved him from death;
	quant des toreaus qui feu gitoient	when from the bulls who were spitting fire
13204	par leur gueules et qui venoient	from their mouths approached
	Jason ardoir ou depecier,	Jason in order to burn him or tear him to pieces
	sanz feu sentir et sanz blecier	without feeling any fire or getting hurt at all
	par ses charmes le delivra,	she saved him with her charms
13208	et li serpent li enivra	and intoxicated the dragon for him
	si qu'onc ne se pot esveillier,	so that it could never wake up,
	tant le fist formant someillier?	she had put him into such a deep sleep?

	Des chevaliers de terre nez,	The knights that arose from the earth,
13212	bataillereus et forsenez,	bellicose and furious,
	qui Jason voloient occierre	who wanted to kill Jason
	quant il entr'eus gita la pierre,	when he threw a rock among them --
	fist ele tant qu'il s'entrepristrent	she managed to make them fight each other
13216	et qu'il meïsmes s'entrocistrent,	and themselves kill one another
	et li fist avoir la toison	and she helped him get the Golden Fleece
	par son art et par sa poison.	through her art and potions.
	Puis fist Eson rejoyvenir	Then she made Eson young again
13220	por mieuz Jason a soi tenir,	in order to make Jason love her more,
	ne riens de lui plus ne voloit	she wanted nothing more from him
	fors qu'il l'amast con il soloit	except that he love her as he always had
	et ses merites regardast	and that he respect her merits
13224	por ce que mieuz sa foi gardast.	in order to better keep his faith to her.
	Puis la lessa, li maus trichierres,	Then he left her, the evil trickster,
	li faus, li desloiaus, li lierres;	the false and disloyal one, the thief;
	don ses enfanz, quant el le sot,	when she had learned of this, she strangled
13228	por ce que de Jason les ot,	the children out of grief and rage
	estrangla de deul et de rage,	since she had had them with Jason
	don el ne refist pas que sage	thus not acting wisely
	quant el lessa pitié de mere	when she abandoned a mother's pity

13232	et fist pis que marrastre amere.	and acted worse than a cruel stepmother.
	Mil exemples dire en savroie,	I could give you 1000 examples
	mes trop grant conte a fere avroie.	but then I would have too long a story to tell.
	Briefment tuit les bolent et trichent,	To summarize, all men deceive and cheat [women]
13236	tuit sunt ribaut, par tout se fichent,	all are scoundrels, gad-about ,
	si les doit l'en ausinc trichier,	this is why one must also cheat them,
	non pas son queur an un fichier.	and not put one's heart in one place.
	Fole est fame qui si l'a mis,	A woman is crazy who does;
13240	ainz doit avoir pluseurs amis	rather she should have several lovers
	et fere, s'el peut, que tant plese	and do, if possible, all she can to please them so much
	que touz les mete a grant mesese.	that she makes all of them suffer.
	S'el n'a graces, si les aquiere,	If she does not have elegance, she should acquire it,
13244	et soit tourjorz vers ceus plus fiere	and should always act most haughtily towards those
	qui plus, por s'amor deservir,	who in order to deserve her love,
	se peneront de lui servir;	make the greatest efforts to serve her;
	et de ceus acueillir s'efforce	and she should strive to welcome those
13248	qui de s'amor ne feront force.	who don't care a lot about her love.
	Sache de geus et de chançons,	She should know games and songs,
	et fuie noises et tançons.	and should stay away from troubles and quarrels.
	S'ele n'est bele, si se cointait,	If she is not pretty, she should dress up
13252	la plus lede atour plus cointe ait.	the uglier she is, the more elegant her dress should be.

	Et s'ele voiait dechoair,	And if she sees the beautiful locks
	don grant deaus seroit a voair,	of her blonde head fall
	les biaux crins de sa teste blonde,	and this would be painful to see,
13256	ou s'il covient que l'en les tonde	or if it is necessary that they be shaved
	por aucune grant maladie,	because of some illness
	dont biautez est tost enledie,	which has spoiled her beauty,
	ou s'il avient que par courrouz	or if it happens that out of anger
13260	les ait aucun ribauz touz rouz	some scoundrel has torn them out
	si que de ceus ne puisse ovrer,	such that she can do nothing,
	por grosses treces recouvrer,	to bring back her thick braids,
	face tant que l'en li aporte	she should get someone to bring her
13264	cheveus de quelque fame morte,	the hair of some dead woman,
	ou de saie blonde borreaus,	or pillows of yellow silk,
	et boute tout en ses fourreaus.	and stuff these into her coils of hair.
	Seur ses oreilles port tex cornes	She should wear such horns over her ears
13268	que cers ne bous ne unicornes,	that neither deer, nor billy goat nor unicorn,
	s'il se devoit touz effronter,	though each one of them were to burst its forehead,
	ne puist ses cornes seurmonter;	would ever surpass her horns;
	et s'el ont mestier d'estre taintes,	and if her locks need to be dyed,
13272	taigne les en jus d'erbes maintes,	she should dye them with the juices of many herbs,
	car mout ont forces et mecines	because fruits, sticks, leaves, bark and roots

	fruit, fust, fuelle, escorce et racines;	have powers and medicinal properties;
	et s'el reperdoit sa couleur,	and if she lost her color,
13276	don mout avroit au queur douleur,	which would bring much pain to her,
	procurt qu'el ait ointures moestes	she should take care to always have some moist creams
	en ses chambres, dedanz ses boestes,	in her room, and inside her boxes,
	tourjourz por sai farder repostes.	in order to make herself up in secret.
13280	Mes bien gart que nus de ses hostes	But she must make sure that none of her guests
	nes puist ne sentir ne voair:	can either see it or smell them;
	trop li en porroit meschoair.	it would really be unfortunate for her.
	S'el a biau col et gorge blanche,	If she has a lovely neck and a white throat,
13284	gart que cil qui sa robe tranche	she should make sure that whoever cuts her dress
	si tres bien la li escolete	should make a décolleté for her
	que la char pere blanche et nete	so that her smooth, white skin is displayed
	demi pié darriers et devant,	a half foot back and front
13288	s'an iert assez plus decevant.	and that way she will deceive men even more.
	Et s'ele a trop grosses espaulles,	And if her shoulders are too thick,
	por plere a dances et a baules,	to be pleasing at dances and at balls,
	de delié drap robe port,	she should wear a dress of delicate cloth,
13292	si parra de mains let deport.	so that she will have a much less ugly appearance.
	Et s'el n'a mains beles et netes	And if her hands are not pretty and smooth
	ou de sirons ou de bubetes,	or if she has insect bites or pimples,

	gart que lessier ne les i veille,	she should make sure not to leave them there,
13296	face les hoster o l'agueille;	but remove them with a needle;
	ou ses mains en ses ganz repoigne,	or hide her hands in gloves,
	si n'i parra bube ne roigne.	so that neither the bumps nor the cuts can be seen.
	Et s'el a trop lordes mameles,	And if her breasts are too heavy
13300	praingne queuvrechiés ou toueles	she should take a headscarf or a towel
	don seur le piz se face estraindre	which she should bind around her chest
	et tout atour ses coustez çaindre,	and wrap it all the way around her ribcage,
	puis atachier, coudre ou noer,	then fasten it, by sewing it or tying a knot,
13304	lors si se peut aler joer.	then she can go out to play.
	Et conme bone baisselete,	Like a good young girl,
	tiegne la chambre Venus nete.	she should keep her Venus chamber clean.
	S'el est preuz et bien enseigne,	If she is worthy and well brought-up,
13308	ne lest entour nule ireignie	she should never let any cobwebs remain inside
	qu'el n'arde or ree, araiche ou housse,	but she must burn or tear, rip or sweep them away,
	si qu'il n'i puisse queullir mousse.	so that no dust gathers there.
	S'ele a lez piez, torjorz les chauce;	If she has ugly feet, she should always wear shoes;
13312	a grosse jambe ait tanve chauce.	and if she has thick legs she should wear fine stockings.
	Briefment, s'el set sur lui nul vice,	Briefly, if she recognizes any flaw in herself,
	couvrir le doit, se mout n'est nice.	she must cover it up, if she isn't stupid.
	S'el set qu'el ait mauvese aleine,	If she knows that she has bad breath,

13316	ne li doit estre grief ne peine	it should not cause her sorrow and pain
	de garder que ja ne jeüne	to avoid ever fasting
	ne qu'el ne parole jeüne;	or talking to someone when her stomach is empty;
	et gart si bien, s'el peut, sa bouche	and should, if she can, be careful not to get her mouth
13320	que pres du nés aus genz n'aprouche.	too close to people's noses.
	Et si li prent de rire envie,	And if she has the urge to laugh
	si sagement et si bel rie	she must laugh wisely and prettily
	qu'ele describe .II. fossetes	so that she shows 2 dimples
13324	d'ambedeus parz de ses levretes	on both sides of her little lips,
	ne par ris n'enfle trop ses joes	nor should she puff up her cheeks when she laughs
	ne nes restraigne par ses moes;	nor pull them in too much when pouting;
	ja ses levres par ris ne s'euvrent,	never should she open her lips to laugh,
13328	mes repoignent les denz et queuvrent.	but should hide and cover her teeth.
	Fame doit rire a bouche close,	A woman must laugh with her mouth closed,
	car ce n'est mie bele chose	because it is not a lovely thing
	quant el rit a gueule estandue,	when she laughs with her maw wide open.
13332	trop samble estre large et fandue.	It [gueule] looks so wide and cavernous.
	Et s'el n'a denz bien ordenees,	And if she does not have straight teeth,
	mes ledes et sanz ordre nees,	but is born with ugly, crooked ones,
	s'el les montrait par sa risee,	if she showed them while laughing,
13336	mains en porroit estre prisee.	she would be less admired.

	Au plorer rafiert il maniere;	There is also a proper way to weep;
	mes chascunne est assez maniere	but each woman is already quite used to
	de bien plorer en quelque place;	crying well in any place;
13340	car ja soit ce qu'an ne leur face	even though no one inflicts them
	ne griés ne hontes ne molestes,	with troubles or shame or problems,
	tourjourz ont eus les lermes prestes:	they always have tears ready:
	toutes pleurent et plorer seulent	they all cry and are accustomed to crying
13344	en tel guise comme elles veulent.	in any way that they wish.
	Mes hom ne s'en doit ja movoir,	But a man should never be moved,
	s'il voait tex lermes plovoir	if he sees those tears flow down
	ausint espés con onque plut;	as thick as any rain;
13348	qu'onq a fame tex pleurs ne plut,	for a woman has never made such tears rain down
	ne tex deaus ne tex marremenz,	nor [shown] great sorrow or great sadness either
	que ce ne fust conchiemenz.	unless it was trickery.
	Pleurs de fame n'est fors aguiet,	A woman's tears are only a ruse
13352	lors n'est douleurs qu'ele n'aguiet;	there is no pain that she will not feign;
	mes gart que par voiz ne par euvre	but she must make sure that neither voice nor actions
	riens de son pansé ne desqueuvre.	reveal any of her intentions.
	Si raffiert bien qu'el soit a table	It is also fitting that at the table
13356	de contenance convenable.	she act appropriately.
	Mes ainz qu'el s'i viegne soair,	But before she comes to sit down,

	face soi par l'ostel voair	she should manage to be seen throughout the house
	et a chascun antandre doigne	and give everyone to understand
13360	qu'ele fet trop bien la besoigne:	that she is extremely capable:
	aille et viegne avant et arriere	she should come and go, back and forth
	et s'assiee la darreniere,	and sit down last,
	et se face un petit atandre	and make people wait a little bit
13364	ainz qu'el puisse a soair antandre;	before she can allow herself to sit down;
	et quant ele iert a table assise,	and when she is seated at the table
	face, s'el peut, a touz servise.	she should, if possible, serve everyone.
	Devant les autres doit taillier,	She should do the carving in front of the others
13368	et du pain antour sai baillier,	and hand out bread,
	et doit, por grace deservir,	and must, in order to win his favor,
	devant le compaignon servir	first serve her table partner,
	qui doit mengier en s'escuële:	who is to eat from her bowl
13372	devant lui mete ou cuisse ou ele,	let her set before him either a thigh or a wing,
	ou beuf ou porc devant li taille,	or cut a piece of beef or pork
	selonc ce qu'il avront vitaille,	depending on what's being served
	soit de poisson ou soit de char;	whether fish or red meat;
13376	n'ait ja queur de servir echar,	she should never be stingy of serving
	s'il est qui soffrir le li veille.	if one permits her to do so.
	Et bien se gart qu'ele ne mueille	And she should also be careful not to wet

	ses doiz es broëz jusqu'au jointes	her fingers in the sauce up to the first joint
13380	ne qu'el n'ait pas ses lievres ointes	nor to get her lips greasy
	de soupes, d'auz ne de char grasse,	with soup, garlic or fatty meat,
	ne que trop de morseaus n'antasse	nor pile up too many pieces of meat on her plate
	ne trop gros nes mete en sa bouche;	nor put in her mouth pieces that are too big;
13384	du bout des doiz le morsel touche	she must take with her fingertips the bits of meat
	qu'el devra moillier en la sausse,	that she then dips into the sauce,
	soit vert ou kameline ou jausse,	whether sauce verte, cameline or jauce,
	et sagement port sa bouchiee,	and skillfully raise this morsel to her mouth,
13388	que seur son piz goute n'en chiee	so that no drops fall on her breast
	de soupe, de saveur, de poevre.	of soup or seasoning or pepper.
	Et si sagement redoit boevre	And she must drink so carefully
	que seur soi n'en espanse goute,	that she does not spill a single drop on herself,
13392	car por trop rude ou por trop gloute	for someone might well consider her
	l'en porroit bien aucuns tenir	too vulgar and gluttonous
	qui ce li verret avenir,	if he saw this happen to her;
	et gart que ja hanap ne touche	she should never to touch her lips to the goblet
13396	tant con el ait morsel en bouche.	while she has anything in her mouth.
	Si doit si bien sa bouche terdre	She must wipe her mouth so well
	qu'el n'i lest nule gresse aherdre,	that she does not leave any grease on it,
	au mains en la levre deseure,	at least on the upper lip,

13400	car quant gresse in cele demeure,	because when grease sticks here,
	ou vin en perent les mailletes,	little drops of it show up in the wine,
	qui ne sunt ne beles ne netes.	which are neither attractive nor clean.
	Et boive petit a petit:	And she should drink a little at a time:
13404	conbien qu'ele ait grant appetit,	no matter how great her appetite,
	ne boive pas une aleine	she should never drink in one gulp
	ne hanap plain ne coupe pleine,	a full glass or a full goblet,
	ainz boive petit et souvant,	rather she should take little sips often,
13408	qu'el n'aut les autres esmouvant	so that she doesn't move others
	a dire que trop an angorge	to say that she guzzles
	ne que trop boive a gloute gorge;	or that she gulps it down;
	mes delieement le coule.	but rather she should drink it delicately.
13412	Le bort du hanap trop n'engoule	She should never put the goblet rim far into her mouth
	si conme font maintes norrices,	as so many wetnurses do,
	qui sunt si gloutes et si nices	who are such stupid guzzlers,
	qu'el versent vin en gorge creuse	pouring wine straight down their throat
13416	tout ausint conme en une heuse,	as though it were a boot
	et tant a granz gorge an antonent	and gulping down so much
	qu'el s'en confondent et estonent.	that they start feeling confused and dizzy.
	Et bien se gart qu'el ne s'enivre,	And she should be sure to not get drunk,
13420	car en home ne en fame ivre	because in a drunken man or woman

	ne peut avoir chose secree;	nothing can remain secret;
	et puis que fame est anivree,	and when a woman is drunk,
	il n'a point en li de deffanse	there is no restraint in her
13424	et jangle tout quan qu'ele panse,	and she blurts out everything as soon as she thinks of it,
	et est a touz habandonee	and leaves herself vulnerable to everyone
	quant a tel meschief s'est donee.	when she gets herself into such an unfortunate situation.
	Et se gart de dormir a table,	And she should be careful not to fall asleep at the table,
13428	trop en seroit mains agraable;	for this would make her much less pleasing;
	trop de ledes choses avient	many nasty things happen
	a ceus qui tex dormirs maintient;	to those who fall asleep this way;
	ce n'est pas sens de someillier	it's not a good idea to slumber
13432	es leus establiz a veillier;	in places made for staying awake:
	maint en ont esté deceü,	many people have been fooled,
	par maintes foiz an sunt cheü	for many times they have fallen
	devant ou darriers ou encoste,	forward, backward or sideways,
13436	brisant ou braz ou teste ou coste;	breaking an arm or head or rib;
	gart que tex dormirs ne la tiegne.	she should make sure that such sleep does not catch her.
	De Palinurus li souviegne,	She should remember Palinurus,
	qui gouvernoit la nef Enee;	who steered the ship of Aeneas;
13440	veillant l'avoit bien governee,	he steered it well while he was awake,
	mes quant dormir l'ot envai,	but when sleep overtook him,

	du governaill en mer chai	he fell from the helm into the sea
	et des compaignons naia pres,	and drowned right near his companions,
13444	qui mout le plorerent après.	who wept bitterly for him afterwards.
	Si doit la dame prendre garde	And a woman must be careful
	que trop a joer ne se tarde,	and not wait too long before playing,
	car el porroit bien tant atandre	because she can wait so long
13448	que nus n'i voudroit la main tandre.	that nobody would want to extend their hand to her.
	Querre doit d'amors le deduit	She must seek the pleasures of love
	tant con jennece la deduit;	while youth still leads her;
	car quant viellece fame assaut,	for when old age assails a woman,
13452	d'amors pert la joie et l'assaut.	she loses the joys of love and the opportunity for it.
	Le fruiz d'amors, se fame est sage,	If a woman is wise, she will gather,
	cueille an la fleur de son aage,	the fruit of love in the flower of her age,
	car tant pert de son tens, la lasse,	for the poor thing wastes so much of her time,
13456	con sanz joïr d'amors an passe.	when years go by and she takes no pleasures from love.
	Et s'el ne croit ce mien conseil,	And if she doesn't believe my advice,
	que por commun profit conseil,	that I expound on here for the benefit of all,
	sache qu'el s'en repentira	she should know that she will repent it
13460	quant viellece la flestira.	when old age shrivels her.
	Mes bien sai qu'eles m'en creront,	But I know well that women will believe me,
	au mains ceus qui sages seront,	at least those who are wise,

	et se tendront aus regles nostres,	and will follow our rules,
13464	et diront maintes paternostres	and will say many pater nosters
	por m'ame quant je seré morte,	for my soul when I die,
	qui les enseigne ore et conforte;	who now teach them and comfort them;
	car bien sai que ceste parole	because I know well that these words
13468	sera leüe an mainte escole.	will be read in many schools.
	Biau tres douz filz, se vos vivez,	Lovely, sweet son, if you live,
	-- car bien voi que vos escrivez	-- because I see well that you are writing
	ou livre du queur volentiers	willingly in the book of your heart
13472	touz mes enseignemenz antiers,	all my teachings in their entirety,
	et quant de moi departiraiz,	and when you take leave of me,
	se Dieu plest, encore an liraiz	if it pleases God, you will teach even more
	et an seraiz mestres con gié--	and will be a master like me--
13476	je vos doign de lire congié,	I grant you permission to teach,
	maugré tretouz les chanceliers,	in spite of all the chancellors,
	et par chambres et par celiers,	in rooms and in cellars,
	en prez, en jardins, en gaudines,	in meadows, gardens and groves,
13480	souz paveillons et souz courtines,	beneath tents and behind curtains,
	et d'enformer les escoliers	and to train the pupils
	par garderobes et soliers,	in wardrobes and in upstairs rooms,
	par despanses et par estables,	in pantries and in stables,

13484	s'ous n'avez leus plus delitables, mes que ma leçon soit leüe, quant vos l'avrez bien retenue. Et gart que trop ne sait enclose,	if you don't have more pleasant places, but may my lesson be taught, once you have retained it well. And a woman should be careful not to stay inside too much,
13488	quar, quant plus a l'ostel repose, mains est de toutes genz veüe et sa biauté mains conneüe, mains couvoittee et mains requise.	because, the more she sits in her house, the less she will be seen by everyone and her beauty will be less well known, less desired and less sought out.
13492	Sovant aille a la mestre iglise et face visitacions a noces, a processions, a geus, a festes, a queroles,	She should go often to the main church and go visiting weddings and processions, games, feasts and round dances,
13496	car en tex leus tient ses escoles et chante a ses deciples messe le dex d'Amors et la deesse. Mes bien se soit ainceis miree	for it is on these occasions that the God and Goddess of Love hold their school and sing mass to their disciples. But she must look at herself in a mirror ahead of time
13500	savoir s'ele est bien atiree. Et quant a point se sentira et par les rues s'en ira, si soit de beles aleüres,	to make sure she is well dressed. And when she feels that she is just right and she goes walking through the streets, she should use beautiful movements,
13504	non pas trop moles ne trop dures,	neither too loose nor too brusque,

	trop eslevees ne trop corbes,	neither too straight nor too bent,
	mes bien plesanz en toutes torbes.	but she should be attractive in any crowd.
	Les espaulles, les costez meuve	She should move her shoulders and her torso
13508	si noblement que l'en n'an treuve	so elegantly that no one else could be found
	nule de plus biau mouvement,	who has such beautiful movement,
	et marche jolivetement	and walk prettily
	de ses biaux solerez petiz,	with her beautiful little slippers,
13512	que fere avra fet si fetiz	that she will have had made so elegantly
	qu'il joindront aus piez si a point	that they will cling to her feet just right
	que de fronce n'i avra point.	so that there won't be the least little wrinkle.
	Et se sa robe li trahine	And if her dress drags on the ground
13516	ou pres du pavement s'encline,	or touches the pavement,
	si la lieve ancoste ou devant	she should lift it up from the side or the front,
	si con por prendre un po de vant,	as if to take in a little air,
	ou por ce que fere le sueille	or because she is in the habit of doing this
13520	ausinc con secourcier se vueille	as though to tuck her dress up
	por avoir le pas plus delivre.	in order to have a freer step.
	Lors gart que si le pié delivre	Then she must make sure that she shows her foot so
	que chascun qui passe la voie	that everyone who passses her
13524	la bele forme du pié voie.	sees the beautiful shape of her foot.
	Et s'ele est tex que mantel port,	and if she is used to wearing a cloak,

	si le doit porter de tel port	she must wear it in such a manner
	qu'il trop la veüe n'anconbre	that it does not block the view too much
13528	du bel corps a cui il fet onbre;	of the beautiful body that it covers
	et por ce que le cors mieuz pere,	and in order that the body be more apparent,
	et li teissuz don el se pere,	and the cloth in which she dresses herself,
	qui n'iert trop larges ne trope grelles,	which should be neither too thick nor too thin,
13532	d'argent dorez, a menuz pellen,	decorated with silver thread and tiny pearls,
	et l'aumoniere toutevoie,	and furthermore her purse,
	qu'il rest bien droiz que l'an la voie,	which must hang straight so as to be seen,
	a .II. mains doit le mantel prendre,	with 2 hands she should grasp the cloak,
13536	les braz eslargier et estandre,	widen and extend her arms,
	soit par bele voie ou par boe;	whether walking along a beautiful path or through mud;
	et li souviegne de la roe	and she should remember the wheel
	que li paons fet de sa queue:	that the peacock makes with its tail;
13540	face ausinc du mantel la seue,	she should do the same with her cloak,
	si que la penne, ou vere ou grise,	so that the fur lining, which is either squirrel or miniver,
	ou tel con el l'i avra mise,	or whatever it's been made with,
	et tout le cors en apert montre	and the whole body should be displayed openly
13544	a ceus qu'elle voit muser encontre.	to those she sees gazing her way.
	Et s'ele n'est bele de visage,	And if her face is not pretty,
	plus leur doit torner come sage	she must turn toward them

	ses beles treces blondes chieres	her precious beautiful blond braids
13548	et tout le haterel darrieres,	and all of the back of her head,
	quant bel et bien tercié le sant;	when they are pretty and well braided;
	c'est une chose mout plesant	it is a very pleasing thing,
	que biauté de cheveleüre.	the beauty of hair.
13552	Torjorz doit fame metre cure	A woman must always take care
	qu'el puist la louve ressembler	to act just like the she-wolf
	quant el vet les berbiz enbler;	when she wants to snatch up lambs;
	car, qu'el ne puist du tout faillir,	because, if she doesn't want to fail completely,
13556	por une en vet .m. assaillir,	in order to have one she must go after 1000,
	qu'el ne set la quele el prendra	since she does not know which she will get
	devant que prise la tendra.	before actually taking it captive.
	Ausinc soit fame par tout tendre	Similarly, a woman should set her nets
13560	ses raiz por touz les homes prendre,	everywhere to catch all men,
	car por ce qu'el ne peut savoir	because since she cannot know
	des quez el puist la grace avoir,	which ones will be favorable towards her,
	au mains por un a soi sachier	in order to grab at least one for herself
13564	a touz doit son croc estachier.	she must go after all of them with her shepherd's hook.
	Lors ne devra pas avenir	Then it should not turn out
	qu'el n'en daie aucun pris tenir	that she have no prize at all
	des fos antre tant de milliers	from among the fools who in the thousands

13568	qu li frotera ses illiers,	will rub up against her sides,
	voire pluseurs par aventure,	or she may perchance have many,
	car art aïde mout nature.	because art is a great help to nature.
	Et s'ele pluseurs en acroche	And if she hooks several of them
13572	que metre la vueillent en broche,	who wish to skewer her,
	gart, conmant que la chose queure,	she should be careful, however things go,
	qu'ele ne mete a .II. une heure,	that she not schedule 2 at the same hour,
	car por deceüz se tendroient	for they would consider themselves betrayed
13576	quant pluseur ensemble vendroient,	if several of them show up at the same time,
	si la porroit bien lessier.	and one could very well leave her.
	Ce la porroit mout abessier,	That would really bring her down,
	car au mains li eschaperoit	because at the very least she would lose,
13580	ce que chascuns aporteroit.	what each one had brought her.
	El ne leur doit ja riens lessier	She must leave them nothing
	don il se puissent engressier,	upon which they might grow fat,
	mes metre an si grant provreté	but put them in such deep poverty
13584	qu'il muirent las et endeté,	that they die worn out and debt ridden,
	et cele an soit riche mananz,	leaving her opulently rich from them,
	car perduz est li remanz.	because whatever is left is lost to her.
	D'amer povre home ne li chaille,	She should not think about loving a poor man,
13588	qu'il n'est riens que povre home vaille;	because a poor man cannot be worth anything;

	se c'iert Ovides ou Homers,	if he were Ovid or Homer,
	ne vaudroit il pas .II. gomers;	he wouldn't even be worth 2 drinking mugs;
	ne ne li chaille d'amer hoste,	nor should she care to love a traveller,
13592	car ausinc con il met et hoste	for just as he lodges
	son cors en divers herbergages,	his body in different lodgings,
	ausinc li est li queurs volages.	so is his heart also flighty
	Hoste amer ne li lo je pas;	I do not recommend loving a traveller;
13596	mes toutevois en son trepas,	however, if during his passage,
	se deniers ou joiaus li offre,	he offers her money or jewels,
	praingne tout et boute en son coffre,	she should take it all and lock it away in her safe box,
	et face lors cil son plesir	and then do his pleasure
13600	ou tout a haste ou a lesir.	either hastily or at leisure.
	Et bien gart qu'el n'aint ne ne prise	And she should take care to neither love nor value
	nule home de trop grant cointise	any man who is excessively elegant
	ne qui de sa biauté se vante,	or one who brags about his looks,
13604	car c'est orgueuz qui si le tante,	because it is pride that tempts him so,
	si s'est en l'ire Dieu boutez,	and surely he has fallen into God's wrath,
	hom qui se plest, ja n'an doutez,	this man who admires himself, mark my word,
	car ausinc le dit Tholomee,	for the same has been said by Ptolemy,
13608	par cui fu mout sciance amee.	who loved science so much.
	Tex n'a poair de bien amer,	Such a man has no power to love well,

	tant a mauvés queur et amer;	for his heart is so evil and bitter;
	et ce qu'il avra dit a l'une,	and whatever he says to one woman,
13612	autant an dit il a chascune,	he'll say the same thing to each one,
	et pluseurs en revet lober	and he will trick many of them
	por eus despoillier et rober.	to strip them and rob them.
	Mainte complainte an ai veüe	I have seen many complaints
13616	de pucele ainsinc deceüe.	from young girls deceived in this way.
	Et s'il vient aucuns prometierres,	And if some sweet talker comes along,
	soit leaus hom ou hoquelierres,	be he a faithful man or a rogue,
	qui la veulle d'amors prier	who wants to woo her
13620	et par promesse a soi lier,	and bind her to himself through promises,
	et cele ausinc li repromete,	she should also return the promise,
	mes bien se gart qu'el ne se mete	but should make sure she not put herself
	por nule riens en sa menioie,	for any reason, in his power,
13624	s'el ne tient ainceis la monoie.	if she does not have the money beforehand.
	Et s'il mande riens par escrit	And if he sends anything by writing,
	gart se cil faintemant escrit	she should look to see if he writes deceitfully
	ou s'il a bone entencion	or if he has good intentions
13628	de fin queur sanz decepcion;	of a noble heart free of treachery;
	amprés li rescrive an poi d'eure,	afterwards, she may write back to him after a little while,
	mes ne sait pas fet sanz demeure:	but this should not be done right away:

	demeure les amants atise,	waiting tantalizes lovers,
13632	mes que trop longue ne soit prise.	but it shouldn't be done for too long.
	Et quant el orra la requeste	And when she hears a request
	de l'amant, gart qu'ele ne se heste	from the lover, she should make sure not to hurry
	de s'amour du tout otroier;	to grant all of her love;
13636	ne ne li doit du tout noier,	nor must she refuse him completely
	ainz le doit tenir en balance,	but rather hold him in the balance,
	qu'il ait poor et esperance;	so that he feels fear and hope;
	et quant cil plus la requerra	and when he presses her still more urgently
13640	et cele ne li offerra	and she does not offer
	s'amor, qui si forment l'enlace,	her love to him, which has gotten a tight grip on him,
	gart soi la dame que tant face	the lady must make sure to arrange
	par son engin et par sa force	through cunning and force
13644	que l'esperance adés anforce,	constantly to strengthen his hope,
	et petit a petit s'an aille	and diminish his fear bit by bit
	la poor tant qu'ele defaille,	until it is gone
	et qu'il faceint pes et concorde.	and they make peace and harmony.
13648	Cele qui puis a lui s'acorde	And then, having granted him her favors
	et qui tant set de guiles faintes,	and knowing so many deceitful tricks,
	Dieu doit jurer et sainz et saintes	she must swear by God, and His saints
	c'onq ne se volt mes otrier	that she never wished to give herself to

13652	a nul, tant la seüst prier,	any other man, no matter how much he begged,
	et dire: “Sire, c’est la some,	and should say: “Lord by all of the
	foi que doi saint Pere de Rome,	faith that I owe Saint Peter of Rome,
	par fine amor a vos me don,	I give myself to you in true love,
13656	car ce n’est pas por vostre don.	and not because of your gift.
	N’est hom nez por cui ce feïsse	There is no man alive for whom I would do this
	por nul don, tant grant le veïsse.	for any gift, however great it was.
	Maint vaillant home ai refusé,	Many worthy men have I refused,
13660	car mout ont maint a moi musé.	for many have gazed longingly at me.
	Si crois qu’ous m’avez anchantee,	I do believe that you have cast a spell on me,
	male chançon m’avez chantee.”	you have sung me an evil song.”
	Lors le doit estroit acoler	Then she must tightly embrace him
13664	et besier por mieuz affoler.	and kiss him to drive him more crazy.
	Mes s’el veult mon conseil avoir,	But if she wants to take my advice,
	ne tande a riens fors qu’a l’avoir.	she should seek nothing else but wealth.
	Fole est qui son ami ne plume	She is a fool who does not pluck her friend
13668	jusqu’a la darreniere plume;	down to the last feather;
	car qui mieuz plumer le savra,	for whoever knows best how to pluck him,
	c’iert cele qui meilleur l’avra,	she is the one who will have won him most successfully,
	et qui plus iert chiere tenue,	and who will be valued more highly
13672	quant plus chier se sera vendue;	since she sells herself at a higher price;

	car ce que l'an a por noiant,	because that which one gets for nothing
	trop le va l'en plus vистоiant;	one treats with disdain;
	l'an nou prise pas une escorce;	one does not place much value on it;
13676	se l'an le pert, l'en n'i fet force,	if one loses it, one doesn't care,
	au mains si grant ne si notee	or at least not as much nor as noticeably
	con qui l'avroit chier achatee.	as one would do if he'd paid a lot of money for it.
	Mes au plumer convient maniere.	There are ways and ways of plucking.
13680	Ses vallez et sa chamberiere	Let her valet and her chambermaid
	et sa sereur et sa norrice	and her sister and her nurse
	et sa mere, se mout n'est nice,	and her mother, if she isn't too stupid,
	por qu'il consentent la besoigne,	so that they will participate in the project,
13684	facent tuit tant que cil leur doigne	do all they can to get him to give them
	seurcot ou cote ou ganz ou mofles,	overcoats or tunics, or gloves or mittens,
	et ravissent conme uns escofles	carrying off like kites
	quant qu'il an porront agraper,	whatever they can grab from them,
13688	si que cil ne puist eschaper	so that he cannot escape
	de leur mains en nule maniere	from their hands in any way
	tant qu'il ait fet sa darreniere,	until he has played his last coins,
	si con cil qui geue aus noiaus,	and he owes them money and jewelry
13692	tant leur doit deniers et joiaus:	just like someone who plays the nutshell game:
	mout est plus tost praie achevee,	prey is finished off much faster,

	quant par plusieurs mains est levee.	when several hands carry it away.
	Autre foiz li redient: "Sire,	Another time they should say to him: "My lord,
13696	puis qu'il le vos convient a dire,	since it is necessary to tell you so,
	vez qu'a ma dame robe faut.	notice that my lady needs a dress.
	Comment soffrez vos cest default?	How could you put up with this lack?
	S'el vousist fere, par Saint Gile,	By Saint Gile, if she wanted to do it,
13700	por tel a il en ceste vile,	for there is such a person in this town,
	conme reïne fust vestue	she would be dressed like a queen
	et chevauchast a grant sambue.	and would ride in a splendid saddle.
	Dame, por quoi tant atandez	Lady, why do you wait so long,
13704	que vos ne la li demandez?	to ask him for it?
	Trop par iestes vers lui honteuse,	You are too timid with him,
	quant si vos less soffreteuse."	when he leaves you lacking so many things."
	Et cele, conbien qu'il li plesent,	And she, however much they please her
13708	leur doit conmander qu'il se tesent,	must order them to keep quiet about it
	qui tant, espoir, en a levé	she who has already extracted so much
	qu'el l'a trop durement grevé.	that she has seriously hurt him.
	Et s'ele voit qu'il s'aperçoive	And if she sees that he notices
13712	qu'il li doit plus que il ne doive	that he is giving her more than he ought
	et que formant grevez cuide estre	and that he thinks himself badly hurt
	des granz dons dom il la seut pestre,	by the big gifts which he has gotten used to feeding her

	et sentira que de doner	and she feels she dare not lecture him anymore
13716	ne l'ose ele mes sarmoner,	about giving,
	lors li doit prier qu'il li preste,	then she must beg that he lend her money,
	et li jurt qu'ele est toute preste	and swear to him that she is fully ready
	de le li randre a jour nommé	to give it all back on a specific day
13720	tel con il li avra nommé.	exactly the one he names.
	Mes bien est par moi deffandu	But it is strictly forbidden by me
	que ja mes n'an soit riens randu.	that anything ever be returned.
	Se ses autres amis revient,	If another friend comes back,
13724	don el a pluseurs, se devient,	of which she has several, perhaps,
	(mes an nul d'aus son queur n'a mis,	(but in none of them has she put her heart,
	tout les claime ele touz amis)	she claims all of them as her friends)
	si se complaigne conme sage	like a wise woman, she should complain that
13728	que sa meilleur robe et si gage	her best dress has been pawned
	queurent chascun jour a usure,	for a sum whose interest accumulates daily
	dont ele est en si grant ardure	and this has put her in such torment
	et tant est ses queurs a mesese	and her heart is so filled with worry
13732	qu'el ne fera riens qui li plese,	that she will do nothing to please him,
	se cil ne li reant ses gages;	if he does not buy back her pledges;
	et li vallez, se mout n'est sages,	and the young man, if he is not very wise,
	pour quoi pecune li sait sourse,	because he has a lot of money available,

13736	metra tantost main a la bourse	will put his hand right away to his purse
	ou fera quelque chevissance	or will make some kind of provision
	don li gage aient delivrance,	to ensure the pledges will be freed
	qui n'ont mestier d'estre reanz,	which don't have to be bought back at all,
13740	ainz sunt, espoir, tretuit leanz	but rather, are all inside
	por le bachelier anserré	locked away from the young man
	an aucun coffre bien ferré,	in a trunk with strong iron locks,
	qu'il ne li chaut, espoir, s'il cerche	so that it won't matter to her, perhaps, if he looks,
13744	dedanz sa huche ou a sa perche,	in her trunk or on her closet rack,
	por estre de li mieuz creüe,	in order to be better believed by him,
	tant qu'ele ait la pecune eüe.	until she's gotten his money.
	Le tierz reserve d'autel lobe;	She should reserve the same trick for a third friend;
13748	ou ceinture d'argent ou robe	she should ask of him either
	ou guimpe lo qu'el li demande,	a silver belt or a dress or a wimple,
	et puis deniers qu'ele despanse.	and then some coins that she may then spend.
	Et s'il ne li a que porter	And if he has brought her nothing
13752	et jurt, por li reconforter,	and swears in order to soothe her,
	et fiance de pié, de main	and promises by hand and foot
	qu'il l'aportera l'andemain,	that he will bring it on the following day
	face li les orreilles sourdes,	let her close her ears to him
13756	n'en croie riens, quar ce sunt bourdes.	believe nothing, for all of them are tricks.

	Trop sunt tuit espert menteür,	All of them are such expert liars
	plus m'ont menti, li fouteür,	they have told me more lies, those fuckers,
	et foiz et seremez jadis	and more false oaths
13760	qu'il n'a de sainz en paradis.	than there are saints in heaven.
	Au mains, puis qu'il n'a que paier,	At least, if he does not have the means to pay,
	face au vin son gage anvaier	he should make a pledge at the wine merchants
	por .II. deniers, por .III., por .IIII.,	for 2, 3 or 4 deniers
13764	ou s'aille hors ailleurs esbatre.	or he should go out and amuse himself elsewhere.
	Si doit fame, s'el n'est musarde	A woman, if she is not stupid,
	fere samblant d'estre couarde,	she must pretend to be tremorous,
	de trembler, d'estre pooreuse,	to tremble, to be fearful,
13768	d'estre distraite et angoisseuse	to be distracted and anxious
	quant son ami doit recevoir,	when she is to receive her friend,
	et li face antendre de voir	and make him understand that really
	qu'an trop grant perill le reçoit	she receives him under threat of great danger
13772	quant son mari pour lui deçoit,	since she deceives her husband for him,
	ou ses gardes, ou ses paranz;	or her guardians or her relatives;
	et que, se la chose iert paranz;	and that if it were discovered
	qu'el veust fere en repoutaille,	what she wants to do in secret,
13776	morte seroit sanz nule faille;	she would no doubt be killed;
	et jurt qu'il ne peut demourer,	and let her swear that he cannot stay,

	s'il la devoit vive acourer,	even if he were to tear her heart out alive,
	puis demeure a sa volanté,	then he remains at her will
13780	quant el l'avra bien anchanté.	when she has cast her spell on him.
	Si li redoit bien souvenir,	And she must also remember,
	quant ses amis devra venir,	that when her friend is to come,
	s'el voit que nus ne l'aperçoive,	if she sees that nobody is looking,
13784	par la fenestre le reçoive,	she should receive him through the window,
	tout puisse ele mieuz par la porte;	even if she could do it more easily through the door;
	et jurt qu'ele est destruite et morte,	and she should swear that she is dead and done for,
	et que de lui seroit neanz	and that there would be nothing left of him
13788	se l'en savoit qu'il fust leanz:	if anyone knew he was inside:
	nou guerroient armes molues,	sharpened weapons would not protect him,
	heaumes, baverz, pex ne maques,	neither helmets, hauberks, picks or clubs,
	ne huches, ne clotez, ne chambres	nor cupboards, cabinets or chambers
13792	qu'il ne fust depeciez par mambres.	for he would be torn from limb to limb..
	Puis doit la dame sopirer	Then the lady must sigh
	et sai par samblant aïrer,	and pretend to get very angry,
	et l'assaille et li querre seure	and attack him and run to him
13796	et die que si grant demeure	and say that he has not stayed away
	n'a il mie fet sanz reson	so long without a reason
	et qu'il tenoit en sa meson	and that he was receiving in his house

	autre fame, quel qu'ele soit,	another woman, whoever she might be,
13800	dom li solaz mieuz li plesoit,	whose favors please him more,
	et qu'or est ele bien traïe	and that now she has been badly betrayed
	quant il l'a por autre enhaïe;	since he has turned against her for another woman;
	bien doit estre lasse clamee	she really deserves to be pitied
13804	quant ele aime sanz estre amee.	since she loves without being loved.
	Et quant orra ceste parole	And when he hears these words,
	cil qui la pensee avra fole,	he whose thoughts are crazy,
	si cuidera tout erraument	he will think, completely erroneously
13808	que cele l'aint trop leaument	that the woman loves him very loyally,
	et que plus soit de li jalouse	and that she is more jealous of him
	c'onc ne fu de Venus s'espouse	than ever Vulcan was of his wife Venus,
	Vulcanus, quant il l'ot trovee	when he found her
13812	aveques Mars prise provee.	in flagrante delicto with Mars.
	Es laz qu'il ot d'arain forgiez	In the nets of bronze that he had forged
	les tenoit andeus an forz giez,	he held both of them with strong cords
	ou geu d'amors joinz et liez,	where they were joined and bound in the game of love,
13816	tant les ot li fous espïez.	so much had the fool spied on them.
	Si tost con Vulcanus ce sot,	As soon as Vulcan realized
	que pris provez andeus les ot	that he had caught them both in the act
	es laz qu'entour le lit posa	in the nets that he had placed around the bed

13820	--mout fu fos quant fere l'osa,	-- he was a real fool to dare do this,
	car cil a mout po de savoir	because someone would have to be clueless
	qui seus cuide sa fame avoir --	to think he can have his wife to himself --
	les dex i fist venir an heste,	he made the gods come in a hurry,
13824	qui mout ristrent et firent feste	and they really laughed and rejoiced
	quant en ce point les aperçurent.	when they saw them in this position.
	De la biauté Venus s'esmurent	Indeed, all the male gods were very moved
	tuit li plusieurs des damedex	by the beauty of Venus
13828	qui mout fesoit plaintes e dex	and she was complaining and lamenting
	conme honteuse et corrociee	like a shamed and angry woman
	don ainsinc iert prise et laciee,	because she was caught and tied up,
	n'onc n'ot honte a ceste paraille.	and had never experienced such shame.
13832	Si n'iert ce pas trop grant merveille	And it was not so surprising
	se Venus o Mars se metoit,	that Venus went with Mars
	car Vulcanus si lez estoit	because Vulcan was so ugly
	et si charbonez de sa forge	and so blackened by his forge
13836	par mains et par vis et par gorge	on his hands, face and neck
	que por riens Venus ne l'amast,	that Venus could not love him at all
	conbien que mari le clamast.	however much she called him her husband.
	Non, par Dieu, pas, se ce fust ores	No, by God, no way, even if he had been
13840	Absalon o ses treces sores,	Absalon with his blonde locks,

	ou Paris, filz le roi de Troie,	or Paris, son of the king of Troy,
	ne l'en portast el ja menoie,	she would not have brought him joy,
	qu'el savoit, la debonere,	for she knew, that sweet girl,
13844	que toutes fames sevent fere.	what all women know how to do.
	D'autre part el sunt franchises nees;	Moreover, they are all born free;
	loi les a condicionees,	but the Law has submitted them to certain conditions,
	qui les oste de leur franchises	which removes them from the state of freedom
13848	ou Nature les avoit mises;	in which Nature had placed them;
	car Nature n'est pas si sote	because Nature is not so silly,
	qu'ele face nestre Marote	that she would make Mariet be born
	tant seulement por Robichon,	only for Robichon,
13852	se l'antandement i fichon,	nor, if we apply our understanding,
	ne Robichon por Mariete,	Robichon for Mariete,
	ne por Agnés ne por Perrete,	nor Agnes, nor Pierrette,
	ainz nous a fez, biau filz, n'en doutes,	rather, fair son, that we have been made,
13856	toutes por touz et touz por toutes,	all women for all men, all men for all women,
	chascune por chascun commune	each woman common to each man,
	et chascun comun a chascune,	and each man common to each woman,
	si que, quant el sunt affiees,	so that, when when are betrothed
13860	par loi prises et mariees,	taken by law and married,
	por oster dissolucions	in order to put a stop to bickering

	et contenz et occisions	and fights and killings
	et por aidier les norretures	and to help the children
13864	dom il ont ensemble les cures,	whom men and women must care for together,
	si s'efforcent en toutes guises	women and maidens,
	de retourner a leur franchises	try anything they can
	les dames et les damoiseles,	to return to their freedom
13868	quex qu'el soient, ledes ou beles.	whether they are ugly or beautiful.
	Franchise a leur poair maintienent,	They maintain their freedom as best they can,
	don trop de maus vendront et vienent,	which creates and will create so many evils,
	et vindrent a pluseurs jadis;	that have hurt many others in the past;
13872	bien an nombroie ja .x.,	I could count at least 10 stories of this,
	voire tant (mes je les trespasse)	indeed so many (but I will skip over them)
	que j'en seroie toute lasse,	that I would be so worn out talking about them,
	et vos d'oïr touz anconbrez	as you would be burdened by hearing them,
13876	ainz que ges eüsse nonbrez;	even before I could count them all;
	car quant chascun jadis vaiet	because in former times when each man saw
	la fame qui mieuz le saiet,	the woman who best suited him,
	maintenant ravir la vosist,	he wanted to take her right then and there,
13880	se plus fort ne la li tosist,	that is, if a stronger man did not grab her from him,
	et la lessast, s'il li pleüst,	and then would leave her, if he wanted,
	quant son vouloir fet en eüst;	when he had done his will with her;

	si que jadis s'entretuaient	so that in former times men killed one another
13884	et les norretures lessaient,	and abandoned their children,
	ainz que l'an feïst mariages	before marriage was instituted
	par le conseil des homes sages.	on the advice of wise men.
	Et qui vodroit Horace croire,	And if Horace is to be believed,
13888	bone parole en dit et voire,	who has said good and true things about this,
	car mout sot bien lire et diter,	because he really knew how to read and write poems,
	si la vos vueill ci reciter,	so I wish to recite them to you here,
	car sage fame n'a pas honte	because a wise woman is not ashamed
13892	quant bone auctorité raconte.	to cite a good authority.
	Jadis avant Helene furent	In former times before Helen there were
	batailles que li con esmurent,	battles over cunts,
	don cil a grant douleur perirent	in which many perished in great pain
13896	qui por eus les batailles firent	who fought battles for them
	(mes les morz n'en sunt pas seïes,	(but the dead are not always known
	quant en escrit ne sunt leües),	when their stories are not read in writing),
	car ce ne fu pas la prumiere,	for she was not the first woman,
13900	non sera ce la darreniere,	nor will she be the last,
	par cui guerres vendront et vindrent	for whom wars will come and have come about
	entre ceus qui tandront et tindrent	among those who will devote and have devoted
	leurs queurs mis en amor de fame,	their hearts to the love of a woman,

13904	don maint ont perdu cors et ame, et perdront, se li siecles dure. Mes prenez bien garde a Nature, car, por plus clerement voair	for which many have lost body and soul, and will continue to do so, as long as the world lasts. But pay attention to Nature, for in order to show even more clearly
13908	conme el a merueilleus poair, mainz exemples vos an puis metre, qui bien font a voair an letre. Li oisillons du vert bochage,	the great power that she has, I can give you many examples, that are good to see in writing. The bird of the green woods,
13912	quant il est pris et mis en cage, nourriz mout antantivement leanz delicieusement, et chante, tant con sera vis,	when he is captured and put in a cage, and very carefully fed inside it, deliciously, and he sings, as long as he lives,
13916	de queur gai, ce vos est avis, si desierre il les bois ramez qu'il a naturelment amez, et voudroit seur les arbres estre,	with a happy heart, as you think, on the contrary, he desires the thick woods that he has loved naturally, and would like to be in the trees,
13920	ja si bien nou savra l'an pestre. Tourjorz i panse et s'estudie a recouvrer sa franche vie; sa viande a ses piez demarche	however well one may feed him. He is always thinking and planning how to get back his free life; he tramples his food
13924	o l'ardeur qui son queur li charche,	with the ardor that his heart loads him with,

	et va par sa cage traçant,	and goes around his cage,
	a grant angoisse porchaçant	in great distress pursuing
	comment fenestre ou pertuis truisse	how to find a window or an opening
13928	par quoi voler au bois s'an puisse.	through which he can fly off to the woods.
	Ausinc sachiez que toutes fames,	Thus you should be aware that all women,
	saient damoiseles ou dames,	be they maidens or ladies,
	de quelconques procession,	of whatever origin,
13932	ont naturele entencion	have a natural inclination
	qu'el cercheroient volentiers	to willingly seek
	par quex chemins, par quex sentiers	by which path, by which trail
	a franchise venir porroient,	they could reach freedom
13936	car torjorz avoir la vorroient.	because they would always want it.
	Ausinc vos di je que li hom	It is the same, I tell you, as the man
	qui s'an entre en religion,	who enters into religious orders,
	et vient après qu'il se repent,	and then it happens that he repents,
13940	par po que de deul ne se pent,	and can hardly keep from hanging himself in grief,
	et se complaint et se demente	and he complains and laments,
	si que touz en soi se tormente,	suffering greatly within:
	tant li sourt grant desir d'ovrer	such a great desire seizes him
13944	comment il porra recouvrer	to seek how he can regain
	la franchise qu'il a perdue,	the freedom that he lost,

	car la volenté ne se mue	because the will is not changed
	par nul abit qu'il puisse prandre,	by any clothing that he may wear
13948	en quelque leu qu'il s'aille randre.	nor by any place where he may go.
	C'est li fos poissons qui s'an passe	It is like the foolish fish who passes
	par mi la gorge de la nasse,	through the mouth of the trap net,
	qui, quant il s'en veust retourner,	who, when he wants to turn around and leave,
13952	maugré sien l'esteut sejourner	in spite of his efforts must stay
	a torjorz en prison leanz,	forever inside the prison,
	car du retourner est neanz.	because there is no return.
	Li autre, qui dehors demeurent,	The others who remain outside,
13956	quant il le voient, si aqueurent	when they see him, they cluster about
	et cuide que cil s'esbanoie	and think that he is really having fun,
	a grant deduit et a grant joie,	much delight and great joy,
	quant la le voient tournoier	when they see him swimming to and fro
13960	et par semblant esbanoier;	and seeming to have fun;
	et por ice meesmement	and especially because
	qu'il voient bien apertement	they see very clearly
	qu'il a leanz assez viande,	that he has plenty of food inside there,
13964	tele con chascun d'eus demande,	as much as any of them could ask for,
	mout volentiers i entreroient,	they would go in there willingly,
	si vont antour et tant tournoient,	and so they go swimming around the trap,

	tant i hurtent, tant i aguetent	hitting and bumping it
13968	que le trou treuvent, si s'i gietent.	until they find the hole and go in.
	Mes quant il sunt leanz venu,	But once they have come inside,
	pris a torjorz et retenu,	captured and held forever,
	puis ne se peuent il tenir	they can't restrain themselves from
13972	qu'il ne vuellent bien revenir;	wanting to go back;
	mes ce n'est pas chose possible,	but this is not possible,
	qu'il sunt mieuz pris que a la trible.	for they are captured there better than in a fishing net.
	La les convient a grant deul vivre,	There they must live in great sorrow
13976	tant que la mort les an delivre.	until death delivers them.
	Tout autel vie va querant	The same type of life is sought
	li jennes hom quant il se rant,	by a young man when he takes his vows,
	car ja si granz solers n'avra	because he will never have shoes so big
13980	ne ja si fere ne savra	nor will he ever know how to make
	grant chaperon ne large aumuce	a hood or a cowl so large
	que Nature ou queur ne se muce.	that Nature could hide in his heart.
	Lors est-il morz et maubailliz,	Then he is done for and miserable,
13984	quant frans estaz li est failliz,	since his freedom is taken away from him,
	s'il ne fet de necessité	if he does not out of necessity make
	vertu par grant humilité.	a virtue through great humility.
	Mes Nature ne peut mentir,	But Nature cannot lie,

13988	qui franchise li fet sentir, car Horaces neïs raconte, qui bien set que tel chose monte, qui voudroit une forche prandre	she who makes him feel freedom, because even Horace says, who knows very well what such a thing means, that anyone who would take a pitchfork
13992	pour soi de Nature deffandre et la bouteroit hors de sai, revandroit ele, bien le sai. Tourjorz Nature recourra,	to defend himself from Nature and would pitch it out of himself, she would come back, I know this well. Nature will always run back,
13996	ja por habit ne demourra. Que vaut ce? Toute créature veust retourner a sa nature, ja nou lera por violence	she will never stay away because of clothing. What difference does this make? Every creature wants to return to its nature, and will never stop trying because of any violent
14000	de force ne de couvenance. Ce doit mout Venus escuser qu'el voloît de franchise user, et toutes dames qui se geuent	force or promise. We must readily excuse Venus for this since she wanted to use her freedom, and any women who play,
14004	conbien que mariage veuent, car ce leur fet Nature fere, qui les veust a franchise trere. Trop est fort chose que Nature,	however much they want marriage, because Nature makes them do this, she who wants to attract them to freedom. Nature is such a strong thing,
14008	el passe neïs nourreture.	that it surpasses education.

	Qui prendroit, biau filz, un chaton	Whoever, fair son, would take a kitten
	qui onques rate ne raton	who had never seen a female rat or a baby rat,
	veü n'avroit, puis fust nouriz	and then was carefully brought up
14012	sanz ja voair rat ne souriz,	without ever seeing a rat or a mouse
	lonc tens, par ententive cure,	for a long time,
	de delicieuse pasture,	on delicious food,
	et puis veïst souriz venir,	if it then saw a mouse come along,
14016	n'est riens qui le peüst tenir,	there is nothing that would hold it back,
	se l'en le lessoit eschaper,	if someone let it escape,
	qu'il ne l'alast tantost haper;	from pouncing on it;
	tretouz ses mes en lesseroit,	and it would quickly abandon its food,
14020	ja si familleus ne seroit;	however famished it was;
	n'est riens qui pes entr'eus feïst,	there is nothing that would create peace between them,
	por peine que l'en i meïst.	no matter how hard one were to try.
	Qui norrir un polein savroit	Whoever knew how to raise a colt
14024	qui jumant veüe n'avroit	who had never seen a mare
	jusqu'a tant qu'il fust granz destriers	up until the time it was a big war horse
	por soffrir selles et estriers,	able put up with saddles and spurs,
	et puis veïst jumant venir,	and then he would see a mare come by,
14028	vos l'orriez tantost henir,	you would hear him whinny right away,
	et voudroit encontre lui courre,	and he would want to run up to her,

	s'il n'iert qui l'en peüst rescourre,	unless there were someone there to hold him back,
	non pas morel contre morele	and a black stallion would not be drawn to a black mare
14032	seulement, mais contre fauvele,	exclusively, but to a sorrel mare,
	contre grise ou contre liarde,	to a spotted mare or to a gray one,
	se freins ou bride nou retarde,	unless reins or bridle slowed him down,
	qu'il n'en a nules espiees,	for he has not studied any one of them,
14036	fors qu'il les truisse desliees	except to find out whether or not they are untied
	ou qu'il puisse seur eus saillir:	or whether he can mount them:
	toutes les voudroit assaillir.	he would want to attack them all.
	Et qui morele ne tendroit,	And whoever did not hold back the black mare,
14040	tout le cours a morel vendroit,	she would run to the black stallion in the same way,
	voire a fauvel ou a liart,	or to a sorrel or to a gray one,
	si con sa volanté li art.	just as her will incites her to do.
	Li prumiers qu'ele troveroit,	The first one that she finds,
14044	c'est cil qui ses mariz seroit,	this one would be her mate
	qu'ele n'an ra nus espiez,	for she would not have scrutinized him at all,
	fors qu'el les truisse desliez.	except to see if she found him untied.
	Et ce que je di de morele	And what I say of the black mare
14048	et de fauvel et de fauvele	and the sorrel stallion and the sorrel mare
	et de liart et de morel,	and of the gray and the black horses,
	di je de vache et de torel	I also say of the cow and the bull

	et des berbiz et du mouton,	and of the ewe and the ram,
14052	car de ceus mie ne douton	because, we don't doubt
	qu'il ne veillent leur fames toutes;	that they want all females as their mates;
	ne ja de ce, biau filz, ne doutes	fair son, do not doubt
	que toutes ausinc touz ne veillent,	that all females in the same way want all males,
14056	toutes volentiers les accueillent.	they all welcome them gladly.
	Ausinc est il, biau filz, par m'ame,	And so it is, fair son, by my soul,
	de tout houme et de toute fame	with every man and every woman
	quant a naturel appetit,	with regards to natural appetite,
14060	don lai les retret un petit.	from which the law removes them a bit.
	Un petit? Mes trop, ce me samble;	A bit? Rather, too much, it seems to me;
	car quant lai les a mis ensamble,	because when law put them together,
	el veust, soit vallez ou pucele,	it wanted, as concerns both young men and women,
14064	que cil ne puisse avoir que cele,	that he be only able to have her,
	au mains tant con ele soit vive,	at least as long as she lives,
	ne cele autre, tant con cil vive.	and she no other, as long as he lives.
	Mes toutevois sunt il tanté	But they are nonetheless tempted
14068	s'user de franche volanté,	to use their free will,
	car bien sai que tel chose monte;	because I know well that such a thing rises up;
	si s'an gardent aucun por honte,	some restrain themselves out of shame,
	li autre por poor de peine,	and others out of fear of punishment,

14072	mes Nature ausinc les demeïne con les bestes que ci deïsmes. Je le sé bien par moi meïsmes, car je me sui tourjorz penée	but this is how Nature rules them just like the animals I spoke about. I know this very well myself, because I have always taken the trouble
14076	d'estre de touz homes amee; et se je ne doutasse honte, qui refreine mainz queurs et donte, quant par ces rues m'en aloie	to be loved by all men; and if I had not feared shame, which holds back and conquers many hearts, when I would go walking along these streets
14080	(car tourjorz aler i voloie, d'aournemenz envelopee, por neant fust une popee), ces vallez, qui tant me plesoient	(because I always wanted to go out there, covered with decorations, indeed I almost looked like a doll), the young men, who pleased me so
14084	quant ces douz regarz me fesoient -- Douz Dex, quel pitié m'en prenoit quant cil regarz a moi venoit!-- touz ou pluseurs les receüsse,	when they would send me looks of longing --Sweet God, I would be seized with such pity when these looks came my way!-- I would have received all or several of them
14088	s'i leur pleüst et je peüsse; touz les vousisse tire a tire, se je peüsse a touz soffire. Et me sambloit que, s'il peüssent,	if they had wanted it and if I had been able; I would have wanted all of them one after another, if I could have satisfied all of them. And it seemed to me that if they could,
14092	volentiers tuit me receüssent	they would have all gladly received me

	(je n'en met hors prelaz ne moines,	(I do not exclude prelates, monks,
	chevaliers, borgois ne chanoines,	knights, burghers or canons,
	ne clerc ne lai, ne fol ne sage,	clerks nor laymen, fools or wisemen,
14096	por qu'il fust de poissant aage)	as long as they were of a virile age)
	et des religions saillissent,	and they would have left their orders,
	s'il ne cuidassent qu'il faillissent	if they had not thought that they would fail
	quant requise d'amors m'eüssent.	when they asked me for my love.
14100	Mes se bien mon pensé seüssent	But if they had known my thoughts
	et noz condicions tretoutes,	and the condition of all women,
	il n'en fussent pas en tex doutes;	they would not have had such doubts;
	et croi que, se pluseur osassent,	and I believe that, if several had dared,
14104	leur mariages en brisassent;	they would have broken their marriages;
	ja de foi ne leur souvenist,	their promises would never have come to mind,
	se nus en privé me tenist;	if they had secretly held me naked;
	nus n'i gardast condicion,	not one would have remained faithful to his position,
14108	foi ne veu ne religion,	faith, nor vow nor religion,
	se ne fust aucuns forsenez	unless one was a bit crazy
	qui fust d'amors anchifrenez	who was a servant to love
	et leaum s'amie amast:	and loved his lady love faithfully:
14112	cil espoir quite me clamast	this one would probably have nothing to do with me
	et pensast a le seue avoir,	and would think of having her alone,

	don il ne preïst nul avoir.	which he would give up for no price.
	Mes mout est po de tex amanz,	But such lovers are so rare,
14116	si m'aïst Dex et sainz Amanz,	may God and St. Amanz help me,
	comme je croi certainement:	as I believe this to be certain;
	s'il parlast a moi longuement,	that if one of them had spoken to me at length,
	que qu'il deïst, mençonge ou voir,	whatever he said, either lie or truth,
14120	tretout le feïsse esmouvoir;	I would very quickly have stirred him up;
	qui qu'il fust, seculiers or d'orde,	whoever he was, a secular or religious man,
	fust ceint de cuir rouge ou de corde,	whether he wore a red leather belt or a cord,
	quel que chaperon qu'il portast,	whatever hat he wore,
14124	o moi, ce croi, se deportast,	with me, I believe, he would have enjoyed himself,
	s'il cuidast que je le vousisse	if he thought that I wanted it
	ou que, sanz plus, le li soffrisse.	or that, without further ado, I would allow him to do it.
	Ainsinc Nature nos joutise,	Thus does Nature rule us,
14128	qui nos queurs a deliz attise;	who enflames our hearts with pleasure;
	por quoi Venus de Mars amer	which is why Venus deserved a lot less blame
	a mains deservi a blamer.	for loving Mars.
	Ainsinc con en tel point estoient	Thus when Mars and Venus who loved each other
14132	Mars et Venus, qui s'entre'amoient,	were in such a position,
	des dex i ot mainz qui vousissent	there were many gods there who wished
	que li autre d'aus se resissent	that the others would find them

	en tel point con il font de Mars.	in the same position as they did Mars.
14136	Mieuz vousist puis .II. mile mars avoir perdu dam Vulcanus que ceste euvre seüst ja nus car li dui, qui tel honte an orent,	It would have been better for my lord Vulcan to lose two thousand marks than to have anyone know of this business; because the two of them, who felt so much shame,
14140	quand il virent que tuit le sorent, firent des lors a huis ouvert ce qu'il fesoient en couvert, n'onques puis du fet n'orent honte	once they saw that everyone knew about it, did from then on with open doors what they used to do in secret; never again did they feel shame because of the deed
14144	que li dieu firent d'aus leur conte et tant peuplaierent la fable qu'el fu partout le ciel notable: s'an fu Vulcanus plus irez	that the gods made into one of their tales, spreading the story among so many that it became well known throughout the heavens; and Vulcan was even more angry about it
14148	quant plus fu li fez enpirez, n'onques puis n'i pot conseil metre, et si con tesmoigne la letre, mieuz le venist estre sofferz	since the deed had been made even worse, never again could he repair what he did; and as the text bears witness; it would have been better for him to put up with it
14152	qu'avoir au lit les laz offerz, et que ja ne s'en esmeüst,, mes feinsist que riens n'en seüst, s'il vousist avoir bele chiere	than to have placed the nets around the bed, and he should never have gotten upset, but rather pretended he knew nothing, if he wanted Venus to smile

14156	de Venus, qui tant avoit chiere.	on him, whom he held so dear.
	Si se devoit cil prendre garde	Furthermore, whoever watches over his wife or lady love
	qui sa fame ou s'amie garde	and by his foolish spying manages
	et par son fol aguiet tant euvre	to catch her in the act,
14160	qu'il la prent provee seur l'euvre,	he must be very careful
	car sache que pis en fera	because she will do worse
	quant prise provee sera;	when caught in the act;
	ne cil qui du mal felon art,	and he who burns from that wicked pain,
14164	qui si l'a prise par son art,	who caught her this way through his cunning,
	ja mes n'en avra puis la prise	never again will he have her esteem,
	ne biau semblant ne bon servise.	her favor or her willingness.
	Trop est fos maus que jalousie,	Jealousy is such a foolish affliction,
14168	qui les jalous art et soussie;	which burns and worries jealous men;
	mes ceste a jalousie fainte	But the woman who has falsely made some complaint
	qui faintemant fet tel complainte	has feigned jealousy
	et amuse ainsinc le musart:	and thus foils the fool:
14172	quant plus l'amuse, et cil plus art.	since the more she fools him, the more he burns.
	Et s'il ne s'en daigne escondire,	And if he does not take the trouble to excuse himself
	ainz die, por lui metre en ire,	then she must say, in order to anger him,
	qu'il a voirement autre amie,	that he really must have another friend,
14176	gart qu'el ne s'en corroce mie.	and she should be careful not to get angry.

	Ja soit ce que semblant an face,	Whatever appearance she may feign
	se cil autre amie porchace,	if he his pursuing another woman,
	ja ne li soit a un bouton	this scoundrel's lechery
14180	de la ribaudie au glouton,	should never mean anything to her.
	mes face tant que cil recroie,	but she should manage to make him believe,
	por ce que d'amer ne recroie,	since he has not ceased loving her,
	qu'el veille autre ami porchacier	that she wants to pursue another lover
14184	et qu'el nou fet for por chacier	and she is doing it only to get rid of
	celui don el veust estre estrange,	this man from whom she wishes to distance herself,
	car bien est droiz qu'el s'en estrange;	because it is right that she take her distance from him;
	et die: "Trop m'avez meffet,	and she should say: "You've done me so much wrong
14188	vanchier m'esteut de ce meffet.	that it is fitting I take revenge for this misdeed.
	Puis que vos m'avez fete coupe,	Since you have dealt me such a blow,
	je vos servirai d'autel coupe."	I will give the same back to you."
	Lors sera cil en pire point	Then he will be in a worse situation
14192	c'onques ne fu, s'il l'aime point,	than he ever was, if he loves her at all,
	ne ne s'en savra deporter,	and he will not know how to enjoy himself,
	car nus n'a poair de porter	for nobody is able to carry
	grant amor ardanment ou piz	a great love burning in his heart
14196	s'il na poor d'estre acoupiz.	if he is not afraid of being cheated on.
	Lors resaille la chamberiere,	Then the maid should burst in

	qui face pooreuse chiere,	with a terrified look on her face,
	et die: "Lasse, mortes sommes!	and say, "Alas! we are dead!
14200	Mi sires, ou ne sai quex homes,	My lord, or I don't know what man,
	est antrez dedanz notre court."	has entered our courtyard."
	La convient que la dame court	Then the lady must run
	et antrelaist toute besoigne,	and leave all tasks unfinished,
14204	mes le vallet ainceis respoigne	but first she must hide the young man
	an tait, en estable ou en huche,	in a stable, a horse shed or a chest
	jusqu'a tant qu'ele le rehuche,	until she remembers him
	quant ele iert arriers la venue.	when she returns there.
14208	Cil que desierre la venue	He who desires her return,
	voudroit lors estre ailleurs, espoir,	may wish then that he were elsewhere
	de poor et de desespoir.	out of fear and despair.
	Lors, se c'est uns autres amis,	Then, if there is another lover,
14212	cui la dame terme avra mis,	to whom the lady has given a rendez-vous,
	dom el n'avra pas esté sage,	though she was foolish to do so,
	qu'il n'en port du tout le musage,	The first one will not tolerate her stupidity,
	conbien que de l'autre li manbre,	however much she keeps him in mind,
14216	mener le peut en quelque chambre.	She can lead him to some room.
	Face lors tout ce qu'il vorra	Then he who cannot remain
	cil qui demourer n'i porra,	can do all that he wants,

	don mout avra pesance et ire,	but will be very put out,
14220	car la dame li porra dire:	for the lady can say to him:
	“Du demourer est ce neanz	“Remaining here like this is impossible
	puis que mi sires est ceanz,	since my husband is within,
	et .IIII. mien cousin germain.	and four of my first cousins.
14224	Si m’aïst Dex et Saint Germain,	So help me God and Saint Germain,
	quant autre foiz venir porrez,	if you can come back another time,
	je feré quan que vos vorrez;	I’ll do everything you want,
	mes soffrir vos convient atant.	but you’ll have to be patient until then.
14228	Je m’an revois, car l’an m’atant.”	I am going back, because they are waiting for me.”
	Mes ainceis le doit hors bouter,	But she must kick him out right away,
	qu’el nou puist hui mes riens douter.	so that she will have nothing to fear from him.
	Lors doit la dame retorner,	Then the woman must return to the other one,
14232	qu’ele ne face sejourner	whom she must not keep waiting
	trop longuement l’autre a mesese,	too long in discomfort,
	por ce que trop ne li desplese	so that this does not displease him too much
	si que trop ne se desconfort	and he does not become disconsolate.
14236	Si li redoint novel confort,	Then she must give him solace once again,
	et convient que de prison saille	and it is important that he leave his prison
	et que couchier avec lui s’aille	and that she go and lie with him
	antre ses braz dedanz sa couche;	held in his arms in the bed;

14240	mes gart que sanz poor n'i couche: face li antandant et die qu'ele est trop fole et trop hardie, et jurt que par l'ame son pere	but she must be careful that he not lie without fear: make him understand by saying that she is too crazy and too reckless, and she should swear on her father's soul
14244	l'amor de li trop chier compere quant se met en tele aventure, ja soit ce qu'el soit plus seüre que ceus qui vont a leur talant	that her love for him is costing her too much since she puts herself at such risk, even though she would be safer than those who decide to go
14248	par chans et par vignes balant; car deliz an seürté pris mains est plesanz, mains a de pris. Et quant aler devront ensamble,	dancing through fields and vineyards; for delight taken in safety is less pleasurable and less valued. And when they go off together,
14252	gart que ja cil a lui n'assamble, conbien qu'il la tiegne a sejour, por qu'ele voie cler le jor, qu'el n'antrecloe ainz les fenestres,	she should be careful that he never get too close, however much he persists with her, as long as she sees bright, without her partly closing the windows,
14256	que si soit ombrages li estres que, s'ele a ne vice ne tache seur sa char, que ja cil nou sache. Gart que nule ordure n'i voie,	so that they are shadowed so that if she has some flaw or spot on her flesh, he will never know it. She must be careful he never sees anything ugly on her
14260	qu'il se metroit tantost a voie	or he would hit the road right away

	et s'en fueroit queue levee	and would run with his tail in the air
	s'an seroit honteuse et grevee.	and she would be ashamed and hurt.
	Et quant se seront mis an l'euvre,	And when they get into the act,
14264	chascuns d'aus si sagement euvre,	each one of them must work skillfully,
	et si a point, que il conviegne	and meticulously, for it is important
	que li deliz ensamble viegne	that they both reach pleasure together
	de l'une et de l'autre partie	on both sides
14268	ainz que l'euvre soit departie,	before the deed is done,
	et s'antredoivent entr'atendre	and each one must wait for the other
	por ansamble a leur bonne tendre.	so that they both move together towards satisfaction.
	L'un ne doit pas l'autre lessier,	One must not leave the other behind,
14272	de nagier ne doive cessier	they must not stop swimming
	jusqu'il preingnent ansamble port;	until they arrive together at the port;
	lors avront anterin deport.	then they will have complete pleasure.
	Et s'el n'i a point de delit,	And if she feels no pleasure at all,
14276	faindre doit que trop s'i delit,	she must pretend that she does,
	et faigne et face touz les signes	and pretend and make all the signs
	qu'el set qui sunt au delit dignes,	that she knows indicate pleasure,
	si qu'il cuit que cele an gré preigne	so that he thinks she takes gladly
14280	ce qu'el ne prise une chateigne.	what she does not value more than a chestnut.
	Et s'il, por eus asseürer,	And if, in order to make them both feel safe

	peut vers la dame procurer	he can get the lady
	qu'ele viegne a son propre hostel,	to come to his lodgings,
14284	si roit la dame propos tel,	the lady must have a plan on her side,
	le jor qu'el devra l'erre anprendre,	the day she is to set out,
	qu'el se face un petit atandre,	to make him wait a little,
	si que cil en ait grant desir	so that he has a great desire
14288	ainz qu'il la tiegne a son plesir.	before taking his pleasure with her.
	Geus d'amors est, quant plus demeure,	The more it is delayed,
	plus agreable par demeure,	more pleasurable from waiting, is the game of love,
	s'an sunt il mains antalenté	and those who have all they want
14292	qui les ont a leur volanté.	feel less desire.
	Et quant iert a l'ostel venue	And when she arrives at his lodgings
	ou tant sera chiere tenue,	where she will be held so dearly,
	lors li jurt et li face antandre	she must swear and make him understand
14296	qu'au jalous se fet tant antandre	that she is making her jealous husband wait so long
	qu'ele en fremist et tremble toute,	that she is shivering and trembling all over,
	et que trop durement se doute	and that she fears very strongly
	d'estre ledangiee ou batue	that she will be treated badly or beaten
14300	quant el iert arriers revenue;	when she returns home;
	mes comment qu'ele se demente,	but however much she carries on,
	conbien qu'el die voir ou mente,	whether she is truthful or lying,

	preingne an poor seürement,	let her be secure in her fear,
14304	seürté pooreusement,	and remain fearful in her security,
	et facent en leur priveté	and let them privately
	tretoute leur joliveté.	all their pleasure.
	Et s'el n'a pas laisir d'aler	And if she does not have the possibility of going
14308	a son hostel a li paler,	to his house to talk to him,
	ne recevoir ou sien ne l'ose,	and does not dare to receive him at her place,
	tant la tient li jalous anclose,	because her jealous husband has her shut in,
	lors le doit, s'el peut, anivrer,	then she must, if she is able, get him drunk,
14312	se mieuz ne s'an set delivrer.	if she knows no better way to free herself.
	Et se de vin nou peut fere ivre,	And if she cannot get him drunk on wine,
	d'erbes peut avoir une livre,	she can get a pound of herbs,
	ou plus ou mains, don sanz dangier	more or less, that without any problem
14316	li peut fere boivre ou mangier:	she can get him to drink or eat,
	lors dormira cil si formant	and then he will sleep so soundly
	qu'il li lerra fere an dormant	that he will let her do while sleeping
	tretout quan que cele vorra,	absolutely everything that she wishes,
14320	car destourner ne l'an pourra.	because he will be unable to prevent her from it.
	De sa mesnie, s'ele l'a,	From among her servants, if she has any,
	anvoit ci l'un, et l'autre la;	she should send one here and one there;
	ou par legiers dons les deçoive	or deceive them with little gifts

14324	et son ami par eus reçoive; ou les repeut touz abever, se du secré les veust sevrer. Ou s'il li plest, au jalous die:	and with their help receive her friend; or she could have them all get drunk, if she wants to keep them out of the secret. Or if she pleases, she should say to the jealous husband;
14328	“Sire, ne sai quel maladie, ou fievre ou goutte ou apotume, tout le cors m'anbrase et alume; si m'esteut que j'aïlle aus estuves;	“Lord, I don't know what illness, a fever or gout or boil, has set fire to my whole body; so it is necessary for me to go to the baths;
14332	tout aions nous ceanz .II. cuves, n'i vaudroit riens baign sanz estuve, por ce convient que je m'estuve.” Quant li vilains avra songié,	even though we have two tubs here, a bath without steam treatment is not worth it, this is why I need to go to the baths. When the rogue has thought about it,
14336	li donra il, espoir, congié, conbien qu'il face lede chiere; mes qu'el maint sa chamberiere, ou aucune seue voisine	perhaps he will give her leave, even though he makes a sour face; but she should bring her chambermaid, or one of her neighbors
14340	qui savra toute sa couvine et son ami, espoir, ravra. et cele ainsinc tout resavra, Lors s'en ira chiés l'estuvier,	who knows of the whole plan and who will perhaps have her own friend. and she will also know all about it. Then they will go off together to the baths,
14344	mes ja ne cuve ne cuvier	but neither bath nor tub

	par aventure n'i querra,	will they happen to request,
	mes o son ami se gerra,	but she will lie with her friend
	se n'est, por ce que bon leur semble,	unless, because it seems good to them,
14348	que baignier se doivent ensemble;	they bathe together;
	car il la peut ileuc atandre,	because he can wait for her there
	s'il set qu'ele doit cele part tandre.	if he knows that she is coming there.
	Nus ne peut metre en fame garde,	Nobody can keep watch over a woman,
14352	s'ele meïsmes ne se garde.	if she does not watch herself.
	Se c'iert Argus qui la gardast	Even if it were Argus who was guarding her,
	et de ses.c. euz l'esgardast,	watching her with his 100 eyes,
	dont l'une des moitez veilleit	half of which were awake
14356	et l'autre moitié someillait,	and the other half asleep,
	quant Jupiter li fist tranchier	when Jupiter had his head
	le chief, por Yo revanchier	cut off, in order to revenge Yo,
	qu'il avoit en vache muee	whom he had turned into a cow,
14360	de forme humaine desnuee	depriving her of her human form
	(Mercurius le li trancha	(Mercury cut it off
	quant de Juno la revancha),	when he took vengeance for Juno),
	n'i vaudroit sa garde mes rien.	his guard would no longer be worth anything.
14364	Fos est qui garde tel mesrien.	He is a fool who tries to guard such a creature.
	Mes gart que ja ne soit si sote,	But she must be careful never to be so silly,

	por riens que clers ne lais li note,	that no matter what clerks and laymen write,
	que ja riens d'anchantement croie,	as to believe a word about spells,
14368	ne sorcerie ne charoie,	or witchcraft or charms,
	ne Balenuz ne sa sciance,	or Balenuz or his science,
	ne magique ne nigromance,	or magic, white or black,
	que par ce puisse home esmouvoir	thinking that through this she can force
14372	a ce qu'il l'aint par estouvoir	men to love someone
	ne que por li nule autre hee.	or to hate someone else through her efforts
	Onques ne pot tenir Medee	Never could Medea hold onto
	Jason por nul anchantement,	Jason by any enchantment,
14376	n'onq Cyrcé ne tint ansemant	nor in the same way could Circe prevent
	Ulixés qu'il ne s'en foïst	Ulysses from fleeing
	por nul sort que fere en poïst.	whatever spell she could cast on him.
	Si gart fame qu'a nul amant,	A woman must also be careful not to give to any lover,
14380	tant l'aille son ami clamant,	however much he claims to be her friend,
	ne doigne don qui gueres vaille.	any gift that is worth anything.
	Bien doingt oreillier, ou touaille,	She may certainly give a pillow, or towel,
	ou queuvrechief, ou aumosniere,	or a head scarf, or a purse,
14384	mes qu'el ne soit mie trop chiere,	as long as it is not very expensive,
	aguillier, ou laz, ou ceinture,	a needle box, some laces or a belt,
	don po vaille la ferreüre,	whose buckle is not worth much,

	ou un biau petit coutelet,	or a pretty little knife,
14388	ou de fil un lumuisselet,	or a spool of thread,
	si con font nonains par costume	just as nuns are in the habit of making
	-- mes fos est qui les acostume;	-- but whoever frequents them is a fool,
	mieuz vient fames du siecle amer:	it is better to love lay women:
14392	l'en ne s'en fet pas tant blamer,	for you don't get so much blame,
	si vont mieuz a leur volantez;	and they are freer to act as they wish;
	leur mariz et leur parentez	they know how to deceive with words
	sevent bien de paroles pestre;	their husbands and relatives;
14396	et ja soit ce qu'il ne puisse estre	and although it can turn out
	que l'une et l'autre trop ne coust	that both laywomen and nuns cost too much,
	trop sunt nonains de graindre coust.	nuns are more costly.
	Mes hom qui bien sages seroit	But a man who is wise
14400	touz dons de fame douteroit,	will be suspicious of any gift from a woman,
	car dons de fame, au dire voir,	because a woman's gifts, to tell the truth,
	ne sunt fors laz a decevoir;	are only traps intended to deceive;
	et contre sa nature peche	and a woman sins against nature
14404	fame qui de largece a teche.	if she has the flaw of generosity.
	Lessier devons largece aus homes	We must leave generosity to men
	car, quant nous, fames, larges some	because, when we women are generous,
	c'est grant mescheance et granz vices,	it is a great misfortune and a great vice,

14408	deables nous ont fet si nices.	the devil has made us all so foolish.
	Mes ne m'en chaut, il n'en est guieres	But this does not matter to me, for there is scarcely one
	qui de dons sai coustumieres.	who is in the habit of giving gifts.
	De tex dons con j'ai dit devant,	As I have said of such gifts earlier,
14412	mes que ce soit an decevant,	as long as it is in order to deceive,
	biau filz, poez vos bien user	fair son, you can very well use them
	por les musarz mieuz amuser;	to better fool fools;
	et gardez quan-que l'en vos done,	and keep everything they give you,
14416	et vos soviegne de la bone	and remember the limit
	ou tretoute jennece tant,	towards which all youth goes,
	se chascuns poait vivre tant:	if everyone could live that long:
	c'est de viellece, qui ne cesse,	that is old age, which advances relentlessly,
14420	qui chascun jor de nous s'apresse,	which approaches us day by day,
	si que, quant la seroiz venuz,	so that, when you arrive at that point,
	ne saiez pas por fos tenuz,	you won't be taken for a fool,
	mes saiez d'avoir si garniz	but will be so provided for
14424	que vos n'en saiez escharniz,	that you will not be a laughing stock,
	car aquerre, s'il n'i a garde,	because acquiring goods is not worth a mustard seed,
	ne vaut pas un grain de moustarde.	unless one keeps them.
	Ha! lasse! ainsinc n'ai ge pas fet,	Ha! Alas! this is not the way I did it,
14428	or sui povre par mon las fet!	now I am poor because of my unfortunate doing!

	Les granz dons que cil me donaient	The great gifts that these lovers gave to me
	qui tuit a moi s'abandonnoient	those who gave themselves utterly to me
	aus mieuz amez habandonnaie.	I gave to those I loved better.
14432	L'an me donoit, et je donaie.	Someone would give to me, and then I would give,
	Si que n'en ai riens retenu.	so that I never kept anything.
	Doner m'a mise au pein menu.	Giving has reduced me to misery.
	Ne me sovenoit de viellege,	I did not remember old age,
14436	qui or m'a mise en tel destrece;	which has now put me in such distress.
	de povreté ne me tenoit;	I did not avoid poverty;
	le tens ainsinc con il venoit	I let time go as it
	lessoie aler, sanz prendre cure	came, without caring about
14440	de despans fere par mesure.	spending moderately.
	Se je fusse sage, par m'ame,	If I had been wise, by my soul,
	trop eüsse esté riche dame,	I would have been a very rich lady,
	car de trop granz genz fui acointe	because I had ties to so many important people
14444	quant g'iere ja mignote et cointe,	when I was still pretty and elegant,
	et bien an tenoie aucuns pris.	and I held them firmly captured by my charms.
	Mes quant j'avoie des uns pris,	But whenever I got something from some admirers,
	foi que doi Dieu ne saint Tibaut,	I swear by God and Saint Tibaut,
14448	tretout donoie a un ribaut,	I would give it all to a wretch,
	qui trop de honte me fesoit,	who did me much shame,

	mes c'iert cil qui plus me plesoie.	but he was the one who pleased me most.
	Les autres touz amis clamoie	I called all the other men my friends,
14452	mes li tant seulement amoie;	but he was the only one I loved;
	mes sachiez qu'il ne me prisoit	but know that he did not value me
	un pois, et bien le me disoit.	more than a pea, and he even said it to me.
	Mauvés iert, onques ne vi pire,	He was bad, never have I seen worse,
14456	onc ne me cessa de despire:	and he never ceased to scorn me;
	putain commune me clamoit	he called me a common whore,
	li ribauz, qui point ne m'amoit.	the wretch, who did not love me at all.
	Fame a trop povre jugement,	Woman has very poor judgement,
14460	et je fui fame droitement.	and I was fully a woman.
	Onc n'amoi home qui m'amast;	I never loved a man who loved me;
	mes se cil ribauz m'antamast	but if this scoundrel had dislocated
	l'espaule, ou ma teste eüsse quasse,	my shoulder, or had broken my head,
14464	sachiez que je l'en merciassse.	know well that I would have thanked him for it.
	Il ne me seüst ja tant batre	No matter how much he beat me
	que seur moi nou feïsse enbatre,	I would still let him fall upon me,
	qu'il savait trop bien sa pes fere	because he really knew how to make peace
14468	ja tant ne m'eüst fet contrere.	however many bad things he had done to me.
	Ja tant ne meüst maumenee	However badly he treated me
	ne batu ne trahinee,	beat or dragged me around,

	ne mon vis blecié ne merci	or hurt and bruised my face,
14472	qu'ainceis ne me criast merci	he would not beg for forgiveness
	que de la place se meüst;	before he left;
	ja tant dit honte ne m'eüst	however many shameful things he said to me,
	que de pes ne m'amonetast	he could convince me with his reconciliation,
14476	et que lors ne me rafetast:	then tame me once again
	si ravions pes et concorde.	and we would make peace again.
	Ainsinc m'avoit prise en sa corde,	This is how he had me roped in,
	car trop estoit fiers rafetierres	because he was such an arrogant lover
14480	li faus, li traïstres, li lierres.	that false man, that traitor, that thief.
	Sanz celi ne poïsse vivre,	Without him I could not have lived
	celi vosisse tourjorz sivre;	I always wanted to follow him;
	s'il foïst, bien l'alasse querre	if he left, I would have even gone looking for him
14484	jusqu'a Londres en Angleterre,	as far as London, England,
	tant me plut et tant m'abeli.	he pleased me so much.
	Cil me mist a honte et je li,	He put me to shame and I did the same to him,
	car il menoit les granz cembeaus	because he led such a wild life
14488	des dons qu'il ot de moi tant beaus,	with the beautiful gifts he received from me,
	ne n'en metoit nus an espernes:	and he put nothing away in savings:
	tout joait aus dez es tavernes.	but spent it all on dice games in taverns.
	N'onques n'aprist autre mestier,	He never did learn any other trade,

14492	n'il ne l'en ert lors nul mestier, car tant li livroie a desprendre, et je l'avoie bien ou prandre. Touz li mondes iert mes rantiers,	nor did he ever need to learn one, because I gave him so much money to spend, and I had plenty of places to get it. Everyone was my client,
14496	et il despandoit volantiers, et tourjorz an ribauderie, tretouz frianz de lecherie. Tant par avoit la bouche tandre	and he spent freely, always carousing, he was always inflamed with his love of pleasure. His mouth was open so wide
14500	qu'il ne vost a nul bien antandre, n'onc vivre ne li abelit fors en oiseuse et en delit. En la fin l'en vi maubailli,	that he did not want to hear any good advice, nor did any other life appeal to him except one of idleness and pleasure. In the end I saw him come to no good,
14504	quant li don nous furent failli; povre devint et pain queranz; et je n'oi vaillant .II. ceranz, n'onques n'oi seigneur espousé.	when the gifts dried up; he became poor and begged his bread; and I had nothing worth two carding combs, nor had I ever married.
14508	Lors m'an vins, si con dit vos é, par ces boissons, gratant mes tamples. Cist miens estaz vos soit exemples, biau douz filz, et le retenez.	Then I came here, as I told you, through those bushes, scratching my temples. May my present state should be a lesson to you, fair sweet son, and remember it.
14512	Si sagement vos demenez	Behave so wisely

	que mieuz vos soit de ma mestrie;	that my science may serve you;
	car, quant vostre rose iert flestrie	because when your rose is wilted
	et les chenes vous assaudront,	and white hairs beset you,
14516	certainement li don faudront.”	the gifts will surely disappear.”